

Thesis Title:

The Understanding, Interpretation, and Implementation of
English Learner Policy
by Minnesota Principals

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA BY

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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September 2019

Acknowledgements

I want to give special thanks to all the Minnesota principals who were gracious enough to share their valuable time in participating in this study. The job of principal is difficult, ever changing, and at times overwhelming but it is also the best job in the world as we are given the opportunity to positively impact lives.

I want to share my heartfelt appreciation to my committee for all the time, effort, and support they provided me; it would have been very difficult without them!

Dr. Kyla Wahlstrom

I wholeheartedly appreciate the knowledge and experience you brought to this dissertation. Your kindness and generosity are an added gift far beyond expectation! I will be forever thankful for the innumerable meetings at the coffee shop, the on-line connections, the late-night rewrites, the meshing of ideas and the patience in completing the final product. Thank You!

Dr. Katie Pikel

Thank you for my start in this journey through the Minnesota Principal Academy, I would not be here without that awesome learning opportunity. I have improved my knowledge and skill exponentially through both experiences. I most appreciate your personal experience in the role of principal. “What does that mean on a Tuesday at 2:00?”

Dr. Kendall King

I appreciate your knowledge and compassion for the education of Language Learners. Your commitment to improving the educational experiences of students, K-12 as well as post- secondary students, is evident in your actions as well as your words. Thank you for your prompt and detailed feedback, this dissertation is much improved due to your input.

Dr. Nicola Alexander

Thank you for your engaging energy in the creation of policy. You were paramount in my path to understanding the complicated journey of policy; you made it comprehensible!

Dr. Peter Demerath

Thank you for stepping in to allow me to defend; it was generous of you to share your time and talent. Your input was very helpful to me in “wrapping it all up” succinctly.

Dedications

I want to dedicate this work to my family, particularly my mother and my children.

My mom, Judy Jacobson,

was my support, my cheerleader, and the person who most believed in me.

Her strong spirit, kindness, generosity, and humor were attributes I hope to emulate.

I am sorry you were not able to celebrate this event with me Jude, but I know you
celebrated for me.

My kids are the most important thing in the world to me!

They were my motivation for earning a PhD, so I may be a model to them.

Thank you, Alexa, Michael, Brandon, Julia, and Charlie.

I love you.

Abstract

This study investigated the role of school principal in the provision of educational services to English Learner (EL) students and examined principal understanding and implementation of language policies and practices. In addition, the study sought to understand the professional development needs and the opportunities in which principals have participated to increase their knowledge of EL education. This study collected survey data and interview data concerning principal knowledge of state and federal guidelines, principal beliefs about educating ELs, program models and services, and professional development related to the education of ELs. Findings from this study show that principals had very limited knowledge of state and federal EL guidelines, and EL policies were not a large contributing factor when developing EL programs at their schools. This study also revealed discrepancies between what principals report to believe about the education of ELs and the implementation of services in their schools. Areas of divergence include provision of professional development, use of native language in programming, and the implementation of co-teaching models of instruction. The findings suggest the need for systematic professional development for principals specific to EL education such as: EL policy and practice, program model options, language acquisition theory, and classroom instructional practices. Strategies and perspectives focused on race and equity alone are not enough to meet the educational needs of EL students.

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Chapter 1

Purpose and Significance

Introduction

Language use in public education in the United States has been controversial since the early eighteenth century (de Jong, 2013; Menken, 2013; Shin, 2016), and the past three decades have demonstrated an increased level of political conflict between policies supporting assimilationist views of language and those supporting pluralist views. Assimilationist discourse focuses on monolingualism as the norm, and bilingualism/multilingualism is viewed through a subtractive lens, as a deficit to correct (Kena, G., Hussar W., McFarland J., de Brey C., Musu-Gillette, L., Wang, X., Zhang, J., Rathbun, A., Wilkinson-Flicker, S., Diliberti M., Barmer, A., Bullock Mann, F., and Dunlop Velez, E., 2016; Menken, 2013; Schmidt, 2000). Assimilationists also perceive language diversity as a force to fracture the community and interfere with English language development. In contrast, pluralist discourse assumes language and cultural diversity as the norm, and bilingualism/multilingualism is viewed through an additive lens. Pluralists view language diversity as a positive attribute, an attribute to support and cultivate (Kena et al., 2016; Menken, 2013; Schmidt, 2002). Pluralists also believe that language diversity provides multiple benefits to individuals and the community as a whole (de Jong, 2013).

Schools are politicized institutions (Hult & Johnson, 2015; Menken & Solorza, 2014; Ravitch, 2011). They operate in social contexts where the language spoken is judged in the same hierarchical ordering system as race and class (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Lindholm-Leary & Hernández, 2011). In the US, languages other than English

typically evoke the perception of lower status if used by native speakers of those languages, and a much higher status if used by native English speakers (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Neeley, 2013). Although the United States (US) does not have an official language policy, English has become the “de facto” official language through legislative action at the national and local levels (Menken, 2008). Language policies, both formalized and de facto, vary in type and purpose at the national, state, school district, and individual school levels (Menken, 2013; Shin, 2016).

Equally varied are the ways in which a single policy is implemented. Within the decades of available research in language policy and practice, researchers have emphasized the value of viewing the implementation of language policy, both formal and informal, from the top-down and bottom-up perspectives (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Johnson, 2009; Menken & García, 2010; Shohamy, 2006). Most language policies are developed from the macro view, a national or state, top-down perspective with little to no input from those in the field (Johnson & Freeman, 2010; Menken & García, 2010). Micro level policies—those developed and/or implemented within a community at the local level—can be found as well, though they are typically less formalized (Johnson & Ricento, 2013; Johnson & Johnson, 2015; Menken & García, 2017).

Language policy has also been explained in terms of the levels or layers between policy creation and policy implementation (Hornberger, 2005; Johnson & Johnson, 2015; Menken & García, 2017). The metaphor of an onion, for example, is one way to represent the diverse players involved in the process, the outer layers representing legislation and political processes, the inner layers representing the practitioners involved in policy implementation (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996).

The research involving language policy interpretation, implementation, and appropriation suggests that to understand the complex language policy process, more investigation is needed to illustrate what happens between policy development and practice. This research will help demonstrate how policies are actualized at the school level (Johnson & Ricento, 2013; Johnson & Johnson, 2015; Menken, 2013). There are a limited number of studies examining the principal role in EL policy and practice. Findings from these studies suggest that principals have limited knowledge regarding policies and practices for ELs and in addition, there are few resources readily available through which principals can acquire needed information. (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Padron & Waxman, 2016; Scanlan & López, 2012). This study is designed to augment current research by addressing the school principal's role in interpretation of state and federal guidelines regarding services for EL education, making sense of policies and practices designed for ELs, and the implementation of those guidelines at the school level. It is essential that the principal as the ultimate decision maker, understand these policies and practices to provide appropriate services for EL students.

The implementation of policy and guidelines at the school level has often been delegated to teachers, the de facto interpreters and implementors of policy due to their position at the practitioner level, the inside layer of the metaphoric onion. An expanding body of research examines the essential role of teachers in promoting the academic achievement of EL students (Johnson & Freeman, 2010; Menken & García, 2010, 2017). There is a growing body of research analyzing how teacher interpretation is transformed into practice at the school level (Menken & García, 2010; Padron & Waxman, 2016; Stritikus, 2003). Current research regarding the principal's role in understanding the

unique needs of EL students and the types of supports needed for both students and their teachers has, however, largely been absent from the literature (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Padron & Waxman, 2016; Scanlan & López, 2012). This study seeks to augment limited research regarding the knowledge and application of EL policies and practices by principals as the instructional leaders in their schools.

English Learner definition. In this dissertation, I use the term English Learners (EL) to define “Students who come from homes where a language other than English is spoken and are entitled to receive language support services in school, typically through English as a Second Language (ESL) or bilingual education programs” (Menken, 2013, p. 161). There are numerous labels to describe EL students, including English Language Learners, Language Minority, Emergent Bilinguals, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, Dual-Language Learners, and Limited English Proficient. I chose EL here because it is the term used by the local governing body, the Minnesota Department of Education (Minnesota Department of Education, 2017).

Statement of the Problem

A growing concern among educators in the US is that too few EL students are reaching proficiency on grade level achievement tests at a level commensurate with their peers, both locally and nationally. Locally, scores on the 2016 Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment III (MCA III) reveal a discrepancy between EL students and their non-EL peers in both reading and math. On the 2016 MCA III Reading test, 16.9% of EL students demonstrated proficiency, compared with 59.9% of all students. The MCA III Math scores showed a slightly smaller gap, with 23.2% of EL students demonstrating proficiency compared to 59.5% of all students (Minnesota Department of Education,

2017).

At the national level, scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation's Report Card, showed a similar gap in both reading and math (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Scores on the NAEP Reading assessment demonstrated a 36-point difference between EL and non-EL students in fourth grade and a 44-point difference in eighth grade. The NAEP Math assessment revealed a 25-point difference between EL and non-EL fourth graders and a 38-point difference between EL and non-EL eighth graders (US Department of Education, 2015).

The growing achievement gap between EL students and their grade-level peers has compelled practitioners, school administrators, and policymakers to revisit language policy and planning in search of solutions (Fry, 2008; Menken & Solorza, 2014a; Polat, Zarecky-Hodge, & Schreiber, 2016; Suárez-Orozco, 2015). In Minnesota, legislators did revisit language policy and passed the Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success (LEAPS) Act in 2014 (Mariani Rosa & Torres-Ray, 2014). The LEAPS Act was intended to add an increased emphasis on English Learner support and thought to be one of the most progressive supports of ELs in the country (Williams, 2015). However, passing a law is not enough to secure its implementation. Williams (2016) states that “the real value of any educational reform is not determined by its passage, but how its implementation shifts classroom practices that drive better outcomes for students” (p. 3). This has not been the case with the LEAPS Act. Implementation has faced a range of roadblocks along the way from unclear definition of what implementation looks like, to the lack of involvement and support of Minnesota Department of Education officials responsible for overseeing the implementation. King and Bigelow (2017) write, “LEAPS

legislation is broad, asset-based, and informed by current research in applied linguistics. It is also, in some respects, best understood as an aspirational text” (p. 9).

Purpose of the Study

In the current school climate surrounding EL policy and practices, it is critical to understand the actors involved in the designation of services for EL students as well as the factors considered. As most language policies are developed from the macro view with little to no input from those in the field at the micro level, it is essential to understand the sensemaking behind decisions made at the school level (Johnson & Ricento, 2013; Johnson & Johnson, 2015; Menken & García, 2017). To both understand the complex policy process and meet the diverse needs of EL students, the research suggests that the loose coupling currently in place between policy and practice will require transformation.

Research examining language policy interpretation, implementation, and appropriation throughout the steps of policy development will help policy makers as well as practitioners better understand, improve, and possibly participate in meaningful policy development leading to a positive end result. The results will be particularly important when implementing at the school level as there tends to be less direction.

There have been recent partial successes in the development of language policy. In Illinois, a new act was implemented with the goal of addressing EL needs through principal and program coordinator coursework. Unfortunately, upon implementation they found the requirements for principals to be very different depending on the number of EL students in the school (Reeves & Tuyle, 2014). The LEAPS Act of Minnesota was passed in 2014. This act was very forward thinking, comprehensive, and supportive of

multilingualism, but it has faced numerous roadblocks in the implementation phase. It was definitely a success in its origin and goals; however, it has yet to truly reach the implementation stage more than five years later. Both of these policies were designed to have a positive impact on EL learning, although neither has experienced success at the implementation stage.

In gaining a better understanding of the process through which language policy and best practice research is transformed into services, programs, school customs, and school norms, it is essential to understand the role of the principal as building leader and ultimate decision-maker. A large body of research exists regarding the vast and, at times, stressful nature of the job of school principal (Beausaert, Froehlich, Devos, & Riley, 2016; Muse & Abrams, 2011; Wells, 2013). The principal's role is characterized by overwhelming responsibilities, information overload, and emotional anxiety (Friedman, 2002). There are innumerable factors guiding principal decision making, many of which are unclear and at times, contradictory (Beausaert et al., 2016; Muse & Abrams, 2011). Others have described the enormous stress felt by principals as they face accountability pressures imposed by local, state, and national mandates, as well as, additional expectations for supervision and evaluation (Wells, 2013; West, Peck, Reitzug, & Crane, 2014). Principals in this study agree with the results reporting the role of principal as an overwhelming responsibility, largely reported as not enough time to do all they need to do.

In the role of policy implementer and decision-maker, principals have been recognized as street level bureaucrats (Demerath & Louis, 2017; O'Laughlin & Lindle, 2015), those with a pulse on local needs and resources. Policies are presumably enacted

at the school level, or what O’Laughlin & Lindle (2015) refer to as street-level implementation. They conclude that policy implementation depends on the professional discretion and leadership of principals (O’ Laughlin & Little, 2015, p. 3). Additionally, a related study attempted to capture how local actors, principals, experience policy at their schools (Werts & Brewer, 2015). They found that principal actors’ experience is strong in the acts of moderation and appropriation, and that principals may need to strengthen skills in negotiation and strategy to fully implement policy. Further, Coburn (2005) concluded that, principals influence teachers’ sensemaking about instructional policy both directly and indirectly. Directly, principals impact teacher sensemaking as they shape policy messages delivered to teachers, some aspects are highlighted, others are filtered out. Indirectly, principals influence teacher sensemaking through discussions of policy meaning and ideas regarding policy implementation (Coburn, 2005). In summary, the implementation of educational policy at the classroom level is influenced and directed by the skills and beliefs of the school principal, the street-level bureaucrat.

The purpose of this study is to explore the knowledge, beliefs, and actions of the school principal in the implementation of EL language policy and practice in Minnesota schools. Concurrently, it seeks to discover whether current language policy, administrator knowledge, and potential contextual factors influence the services implemented for EL students at the school level.

Specifically, this study seeks to explore how Minnesota principals a) use their knowledge of language acquisition and teaching ELs, b) incorporate their knowledge of federal, state, and local policies and, c) make sense of available information to implement quality services for EL students. Additionally, this study will address the potential for the

implementation of asset-based services, those incorporating native language, for ELs. Examining how principals understand these factors, relate them within the context in which they work (interpret), and translate these interpretations into actions may assist decision-makers in understanding the appropriation of services for EL students at the school level. In attending to how principals interpret and incorporate data into service delivery models, sensemaking may assist in understanding the factors principals consider in sensemaking and ultimately, decision making.

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework for the Study

“Decision-making is sine qua non¹ to education administration because a school, like all formal organizations, is basically a decision-making structure” (Hoy & Miskel, 2013, p. 330). In acknowledging the importance of decision-making, researchers became interested in the concept of sensemaking in an attempt to understand how decisions are made— in essence, what we want to consider to help understand an outcome or decision (Helms Mills, Thurlow, & Mills, 2010). The first published mention of sensemaking in the organizational context was authored by Karl Weick in 1969 (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). This groundbreaking work has had a significant impact on the field of organizational studies and beyond (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014).

According to Weick, through sensemaking, “people make sense of things by seeing a world on which they have already imposed what they believe” (Weick, 1995, p. 15), and they “generate what they interpret” (Weick, 1995, p. 13). The action of sensemaking is triggered by ambiguous or uncertain events that disrupt our routines and force individuals

¹ an essential condition; a thing that is absolutely necessary

to address them. Weick (2012) adds that sensemaking is stratified in organizations; thus, fewer voices are heard at the lower levels.

To address the research questions of this paper, I have explored four major bodies of literature: 1) social and historical contexts of language policy and planning; 2) knowledge and understanding among principals of current research regarding language policy and practices for EL students; 3) the potential for the implementation of asset-based service models for EL students (termed Implementational Spaces by Hornberger, 2005), and 4) how school administrators make sense of what they know to inform decisions regarding services for EL students (i.e., sensemaking). These four bodies of literature are the basis for the theoretical framework pictured in Figure 1 below.

The historical and social contexts for language policy and planning interact with what principals know about the education of EL students, and it is at this point of intersection that they develop their perceptions and thinking about what makes sense in their local school context for the delivery of services for ELs. In other words, according to Weick's sensemaking theory, principals make sense of the education of ELs based on their existing worldview. This research study will explore this intersection and the ways in which it may influence the decisions principals make regarding instructional practices for their EL students.

Specifically, the two circles of the Venn diagram represent avenues through which principals may learn about policy and practices for ELs, both historical and current. The left circle of the diagram represents social and historical contexts of language policy and planning and could be valuable in understanding past practices as well as present school practices. The social contexts can help to understand the rationale

of policies and practices and how they have changed throughout time. The circle on the right represents current research, policies and practices for ELs. Current knowledge could be invaluable in determining which practices are achieving the best results in terms of academic achievement for students to enable replication of those programs. The intersection of the two circles is called “sensemaking,” which is where principals make sense of the two bodies of knowledge as they implement services in their schools. The smaller, cross-hatched section within sensemaking is termed “implementational space” (Hornberger, 2005). This is a theoretical space for a school principal regarding choices that he/she could make for implementing EL programs and services involving asset-based programming (such as native or heritage language) in their school.

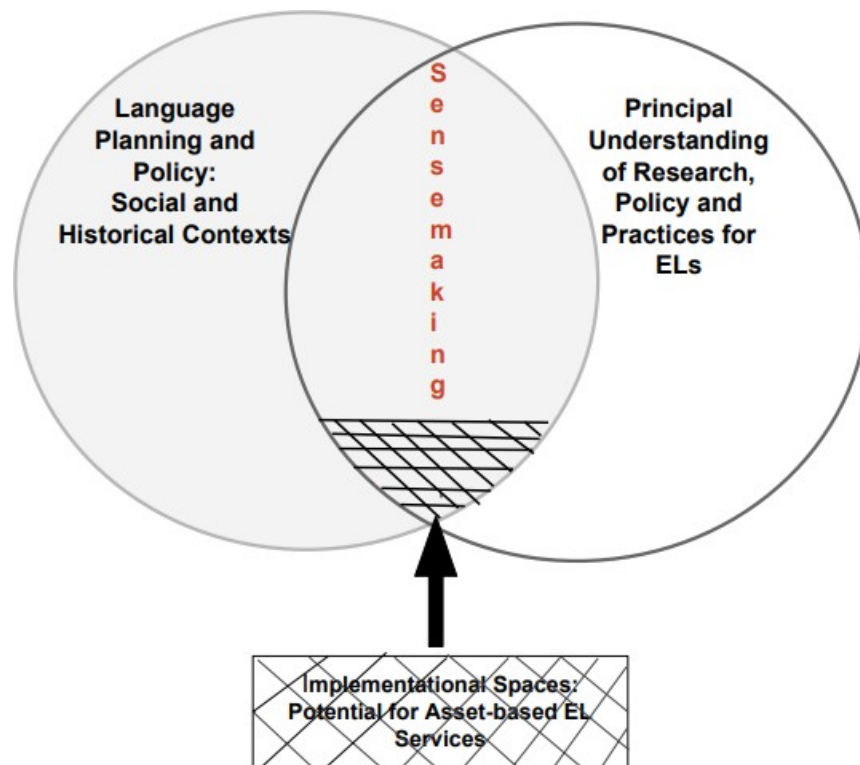


Figure 1. Literature Review Components

Research Questions

The interaction between district, state, and federal EL policies and the implementation of those policies are likely to occur at the building level. The first question is posed to discover whether principals are aware of policies concerning EL students and the actions/mandates included within those policies. The second question is intended to identify the resources available to them to augment understanding of EL student learning and determine whether principals are engaging in available opportunities. The third question is designed to ascertain how the understanding of language policy leads to service delivery at the school site.

Thus, the research questions designed to address these issues are:

1. What do Minnesota principals report to know about EL language policy and practice?
2. What professional development (PD) opportunities specific to the education of English Learners do Minnesota principals report to have engaged in within the past five years?
3. How are federal, state, and district language EL policies reportedly implemented by principals at the school level?

Definition of Terms

Based on current research, the following key terms have been defined for this study.

- Asset -based program models for ELs—Programs for English Learners that maintain the native language while learning English, with the goal being bilingualism.
- EL student, ELs— Students who come from homes where a language other than

English is spoken and who are entitled to receive language support services in school, typically through English as a Second Language (ESL) or bilingual education programs (Menken, 2013).

- Ideological Spaces—opportunities to allow and promote multilingual language programs that include sound educational practice and social justice (Johnson & Ricento, 2013).
- Implementational Spaces—opportunities to promote linguistic and cultural diversity (Hornberger, 2005).
- Language Policy and Planning— “Language planning refers to deliberate efforts to influence the behavior of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes” (Cooper, 1989, p. 45).
- Sensemaking—Through sensemaking, people make sense of things by seeing a world on which they have already imposed what they believe, and they generate what they interpret (Weick, 1995).

Significance of the Study

The 1974 Supreme Court decision *Lau v. Nichols* determined that schools had an obligation to address any language barriers that prevent ELs from fully participating in the educational system (Sugarman & Widess, 1974). The most recent reauthorization of the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), strengthens accountability regarding EL student progress and requires states to include the improvement of English language proficiency as an indicator in their school accountability systems (Minnesota Multilingual Equity Network, 2017).

Over the past 20 years, the number of ELs in Minnesota has increased by 300

percent, making ELs Minnesota's fastest growing student population (Spies, Godinez, Mariani, & Hamilton, 2016). As this population grows, Minnesota's accountability measures continue to demonstrate a notable discrepancy between EL students and their non-EL peers (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018b). The percentage of EL students in Minnesota who do not meet proficiency standards in math increased from 51% in 2016 to 57.4% in 2018; in reading, the percentage not meeting proficiency standards rose from 60.6% in 2016 to 63.4% in 2018 (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018b).

The achievement discrepancy between EL students and their non-EL peers, coupled with the recent reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, highlight the importance of addressing EL academic achievement in Minnesota schools. To reach proficiency goals, it is important for principals to understand policies and best practices that provide optimal support for ELs in their buildings.

This study is important in view of the limited research available regarding what principals know about EL policy and practice. As demonstrated in the literature, the role of principal is key in determining what and how students learn at school (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Gurr, 2015; Rousmaniere, 2013; Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Gaining additional information regarding principal sensemaking in this setting could uncover factors in processing that lead principals to determine the services offered to ELs at the school site. In other words, this study may illuminate the knowledge, beliefs, and actions that could lead from policy to implementation at the building level through the lens of principal. Information regarding decision-making with principals could augment current research regarding factors influencing EL services and,

therefore, assist in improving the academic achievement of EL students. Furthermore, having this information may assist district administration and additional decision- makers in identifying the needs of principals as they work to provide informed and appropriate services to EL students.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of the study is the voluntary nature of the survey and interview. It may be that those willing to complete the survey and/or participate in interviews are more knowledgeable about the topic and thus more comfortable responding. Another limitation was the number of respondents and the area of the state they represent. I anticipated a representative sample of urban, suburban, and rural districts in the survey and interview participants because the professional organizations have a state-wide reach. Respondents to the survey included fewer urban principals than either suburban or rural.

Delimitations of the Study

A delimitation of the study is that the sample population only includes Minnesota principals who are members of either the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) or the Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association (MESPA). Membership in these professional organizations could potentially limit the responses from private schools and public charter schools.

The following chapter will review literature from four bodies of research: 1) Social and historical contexts of language policy and planning, 2) Administrator knowledge of EL policy and practices, 3) Ideological and Implementational spaces, and 4) Organizational Sensemaking. The purpose of exploring these areas of study is to understand principal sensemaking in regard to English Learner education. There has been

very little research focused on decision-making by principals as the school leader. How principals apply their beliefs and experiences with potentially new information will help in understanding how principals make sense of the variables involved in making decisions regarding EL education.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Language policies, both formalized and de facto, vary in type and purpose at a national, state, school district, and individual school level (Menken, 2008, 2013; Menken & García, 2010; Schmidt, 2000). Despite the absence of an official language policy in the US, 31 states have adopted policies requiring all government business to be conducted in English. In addition, several states have introduced legislation mandating English as the sole language of instruction for second-language students not demonstrating English proficiency. Three states— California, Arizona, and Massachusetts—have implemented such laws, although in 2016 voters in California voted overwhelmingly to repeal the English-only requirement from the original proposition (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Menken & García, 2010; Shin, 2016).

There are contrasting opinions regarding what term to adopt when referring to those whose native language is not English and who are currently learning English in the US. Numerous labels have been used throughout the US, including English Language Learners, Language Minority, Emergent Bilinguals, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, Dual-Language Learners, and Limited English Proficient. In this dissertation I use the term English Learner (EL), as it is the term used by the local governing body, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE, 2017).

The use of language in schools has become an issue of equity, challenging belief systems of school professionals throughout the country (Petrovic, 2010; Tollefson & Tsui, 2014). At issue is the perceived and contrasting value assigned to language learning for native and non- native speakers of English (Cummins, 2000; Gándara & Hopkins,

2010; Shin, 2016). ELs are the fastest-growing student population in the country, increasing 60% in the last decade, as compared to a 7% growth in the general student population (Chao & Schenkel, 2013). As this population of students grows, options to retain a student's first language while learning English have decreased in number (de Jong, 2013; Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Hopkins, 2016; Schmidt, 2000). At the same time, language immersion programs primarily designed for native English speakers and with the goal of bilingualism and bi-literacy in a second language nearly tripled from 1993 to 2011 (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2011). The exception to immersion programs designed for native English speakers is the dual immersion model, designed to serve native speakers of the target language and native English speakers together in the same classroom. Ideally, 50% of the classroom's students would be from each language group, thus benefitting both student populations (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2011).

The academic achievement of EL students compared to that of their age-level peers is discrepant both in Minnesota and nationally, creating concern among educators across the nation (Fry, 2008; Menken & Solorza, 2014a; Polat et al., 2016; Suárez-Orozco, 2015). Academic proficiency in Minnesota, as measured by the MCA III, demonstrates a difference in the percentage of EL students and non-EL students deemed proficient in math and reading achievement (Minnesota Department of Education, 2017). In 2016, proficiency for EL students in reading was 16.9%, compared to 59.9% among non-EL students. On the 2016 math exam, 23.2% of EL students were categorized as proficient, compared to 59.5% of non-EL students.

At the national level, scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation's Report Card, demonstrated a similar gap in both

reading and math. Scores on the NAEP Reading assessment demonstrated a 36-point difference between EL and non-EL students in fourth grade and a 44-point difference in eighth grade (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The NAEP Math assessment revealed a 25-point difference between EL and non-EL fourth graders and a 38-point difference between EL and non-EL eighth graders (US Department of Education, 2015).

Purpose and Outline

In the current school climate regarding EL policy and practices, it is critical to understand the actors involved in the designation of services for EL students as well as the factors that are considered. Most language policies are developed from the macro view, a national, top-down perspective with little to no input from those in the field at the micro level (Johnson & Ricento, 2013; Johnson & Johnson, 2015; Menken & García, 2017). Research involving language policy interpretation, implementation, and appropriation at the school level can assist in better understanding how school leaders use sensemaking to design and implement services from written policy.

There is a growing body of research regarding the essential role of teacher agency in promoting the academic achievement of EL students. A fairly new yet expanding research base considers how teachers interpret language policy written at the macro level and convert it into practice at the micro level (Padron & Waxman, 2016). Current research regarding the principal's role in understanding the unique needs of EL students and the types of supports needed for both the students and their teachers has largely been absent from the literature (Padron & Waxman, 2016). Of the available literature, most conclude that principals know very little about language acquisition theory, program design, or implementation regarding EL students (Ascenzi-Moreno, Hesson & Menken,

2016; Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Johnson & Johnson, 2015; Padron & Waxman, 2016).

To better understand how written language policy and best practice research transforms into services, programs, and school customs and norms, it is essential to understand the role of the principal as building leader and ultimate decisionmaker. The purpose of the following literature review is to explore an often-forgotten actor in language policy and practice, the school principal. This review examines how principals use sensemaking to incorporate: 1) their knowledge and previous experience with EL students related to language acquisition; 2) pertinent language policy and practices; and 3) the potential for implementation of asset-based services for EL students.

To address these research questions, four major bodies of literature are explored: 1) social and historical contexts of language policy and planning; 2) knowledge and understanding among principals of current research regarding EL language policy and practices; 3) how school administrators make sense of what they know to inform decisions regarding services for EL students (sensemaking), and 4) the potential for the implementation of asset-based service models for EL students (implementational spaces).

Social and Historical Contexts of Language Policy and Planning

Although there are differing interpretations of the history of language policy, practice, and legislation in the US, there is agreement among scholars that it has been characterized by cycles of acceptance and rejection of non-English, immigrant languages (Menken & García, 2010; Ovando, 2003; Ricento, 2000). Responses to language diversity have been shaped by political, social, and economic forces rather than by the systematized study of language itself leaving policies and, therefore, services to be developed in a relative knowledge vacuum (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010).

The field of Language Policy and Planning (LPP) is considered to be a branch of the larger field of sociolinguistics and has evolved since scholars began developing language planning theories, concepts, and models. Joshua Fishman is considered by many to be the founding father of the sociology of language. In a recent tribute to Fishman, an entire edition of the academic journal he founded, the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, paid him homage for his contributions to the field of sociolinguistics (Hornberger, 2017). Fishman's work as a language activist and scholar has been continued by countless scholars in different regions and sociocultural contexts around the globe, many of whom continue to expand the sociology of language (Hornberger, 2017; Peltz, 2017; Spolsky, 2017). Fishman defines sociolinguistics as "centrally concerned not only with societally patterned behavior through language, but with societally patterned behavior toward language, whether positive or negative" (Fishman as cited in Hornberger, 2017, p. 21).

Menken and García (2017) describe language policy development as a progression from addressing language as a problem to studying written policies and other documentation. From there, language researchers have adopted a more critical view safeguarding against language being used as a manner to support social injustices (Menken & García, 2017). The critical view has been followed by the current focus on educator agency, a relatively new body of literature in which research methods are informed by anthropology, and scholars conduct more ethnographic research inside schools (Menken & García, 2017).

Johnson and Ricento (2013) concur with Menken and García (2017) regarding the dynamics of change within the field and divide the intellectual history into three stages:

(1) classic language planning theory, (2) critical language policy, and (3) intermediary stage (p. 9). During the classic language planning stage, researchers believed in the possibility of objectively studying the science of language planning divorced from the ideological and sociopolitical realities of language use (Johnson & Ricento, 2013). This view of research became problematic due to the difficulties in separating language planning from language use. Following the intermediary stage, they also identify the current stage as embracing the ethnographic study of language policy (Johnson & Ricento, 2013).

Hornberger (2015) has a similar view in her description of the evolution of methodology in the field. Methods began as large-scale, national census, demographic surveys, and attitude questionnaires directed at national or regional levels. The focus then became the incorporation of economic, legal, and political analyses addressing unequal access. Finally, the focus has changed to more ethnographic methods illustrating the complex nature of enacting language policy locally (Hornberger, 2015).

The areas of commonality in the history of language policy among these researchers, although distinct in verbiage, include the debate regarding language as either a problem or an asset, language as a civil right, and the value of the current ethnographic study of language (Hornberger, 2015;. Johnson & Ricento, 2013; Menken & García, 2017; Ovando, 2003). The principal's view and beliefs regarding language policy will likely influence programs and services implemented; thus, it is essential that principals have the information needed to make informed choices.

Overview of Legislative History

Language has been intertwined with many policy issues in state and federal court

cases impacting how ELs should be taught. Although state and federal courts do not create policy, they play an important role in the policymaking process. The purpose here is not to provide an inclusive history but to highlight those cases most impactful in the discussion regarding the education of EL students.

The US Supreme Court ruled on three well-documented cases regarding EL students and their education. In 1974, *Lau v. Nichols* was brought by Chinese parents in San Francisco; it led to the ruling that identical education does not constitute equal education under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Wright, 2010). This ruling established that the Office for Civil Rights has the authority to establish regulations for enforcement, and the Lau Remedies were subsequently created as a guide for school districts to adhere to federal regulations. The second case, *Plyer v. Doe* in 1982, concluded that states do not have the right to deny a free, public education to undocumented immigrant children (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010). Furthermore, in 1973, *Keys v. Denver* was the first de facto segregation case arguing that Latino and Black students were largely separated from their peers. The US Supreme Court ruled that schools must desegregate their student bodies (Wright, 2010).

A number of Federal Court rulings have also had an impact on EL student education. *Casteñeda v. Pickard* argued that the district was segregating students based on race and ethnicity and it failed to provide a successful bilingual program in which children could learn English. The US Court of Appeals ruled that districts must establish a three-pronged test to assure an EL program is consistent with a student's right to an education, with programming required to be: a) based on sound educational research; b) implemented with adequate commitment and resources, and; c) evaluated and proven to

be effective (Wright, 2008).

The 1968 Bilingual Education Act, Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1968, was replaced by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). High-stakes English assessments were put into effect measuring the success or failure of schools and school districts. Content areas were assessed in English—making all exams, in essence, language proficiency exams—and the word “bilingual” was essentially erased from the law (Menken, 2008).

NCLB was replaced by the *Every Child Succeeds Act* (ESSA), signed into law in December, 2015. Under ESSA, English language proficiency became a prominent part of the reporting. States are responsible for holding schools accountable, although each state can set its own goals within the federal framework (Johnson, 2016; Penuel, 2016). Each state must consider four academic factors—reading tests, math tests, English-language proficiency test scores, and high school graduation rates—and can include a state-chosen academic measure in elementary and middle schools (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015). Minnesota public schools serving English learners will be evaluated based on students’ growth on the ACCESS test compared to the growth required to be on track to achieving English language proficiency. At all schools where 20 or more students receive a progress score, the average student progress at the school will be used as the school’s average. This average will be one of the indicators used to identify schools in need of support.

Language Orientation and Status

In his seminal article, Ruíz (1984) introduced a framework from which to view language planning and policy that continues to be valuable in understanding current

policies and practices. Ruiz describes three orientations within the framework: language-as-problem, language-as-right, and language-as-resource. Orientation in this regard refers to the “complex of dispositions toward language and its role and toward languages and their role in society” (Ruíz, 1984, p. 16). The language-as-problem orientation supports assimilationist discourse in which a second language is believed to be an obstacle to overcome through acculturation and fluency in English. Language-as-right has roots in the civil rights movement and can be more complex to address. It includes the right not to be discriminated against based on language used, and sees linguistic rights as basic human right, emphasizing the link between language and culture. The language-as-resource orientation supports pluralistic discourse, in which language is a resource to be managed, developed, and conserved. Language minority communities are essential sources of expertise in this orientation (de Jong, Li, Zafar, & Wu, 2016). Ruiz (1984, 2010) contends that the language-as-resource orientation is the most effective way to build and sustain the use of multiple languages and, as such, should hold a prominent place in policy and planning.

Language as problem. The assimilationist, language-as-problem orientation has a long history in the US. The period from the 1880s to the 1960s was a time of repressive language policies, during which these policies were applied to indigenous people as a means to “civilize” Native communities (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010, p. 23). Forced boarding schools for Native children equated education with English, rendering Native languages not simply less prestigious than English, but entirely unacceptable, with those using the Native language subject to punishment. This phase is sometimes referred to as “a campaign of linguistic genocide” (Crawford, 1995, p. 26). The turn of the 20th century

brought nationalist ideologies and further restrictions on the use of languages other than English. The Naturalization Act of 1906, for instance, required new immigrants to speak English before they could become naturalized citizens. By 1923, 34 states had adopted English-only education policies (Crawford, 1995).

During the recent past, from 1994 to the present, anti-immigrant sentiment has grown leading to many ballot decisions restricting language use and, as in Arizona, to segregation of EL students with no exposure to English speaking peers for up to 80% of the school day (Gándara & Orfield, 2012). NCLB had also been criticized as a restrictive language policy due to its extraordinary emphasis on high-stakes testing in English. Menken (2013) maintains that “. . . language proficiency impedes student performance on a test administered in English, which means such tests have become language proficiency exams for emergent bilinguals, even when they are intended to assess academic content knowledge” (p. 163).

An example of the assimilationist or language-as-problem orientation includes implementation of legislation requiring instruction to be delivered in only English. Such legislation has been enacted in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts, though California voters overwhelmingly voted to repeal the law in November, 2016 (Simon-Cerejido, 2018).

Language as right. The language-as-right perspective views language as a civil right and insists that language can and should be used both within and outside the specific language community, including school. Programs that include native language instruction within the school day are examples of language-as-right in educational settings.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

(UNESCO), a specialized agency of the United Nations, established an international framework supporting equitable language policies at the World Conference on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990). While the conference focused on access and equity in primary education, many governments responded with programs acknowledging the central role of language policies in schools of all levels. The US government, however, was not one of them (Tollefson & Tsui, 2014).

May (2011) refers to language rights as the “Cinderella of human rights, a bastard stepchild” in the wider family of human rights (p. 265). According to May, loss of language rights has not been seen as problematic. At worst, it has been ignored, and at best it has been reluctantly acknowledged and haphazardly implemented (May, 2011).

Identity politics and historical memory are additional lenses from which to view language-as-right. Language use is a way to define group identity and potentially its politics; to take it away is to take away part of one’s identity (Schmidt, 2002). Historical memory, as related to language, is the political conflict over the patterns of racialized ethnic inequality. Historical memory plays a prominent role in language policy conflict (Schmidt, 2000).

Language as resource. According to Ruíz (1984, 2012), bilingual education programs represent the language-as-resource orientation. He believes that the majority of the problems with bilingual education in the US are due to hostility and divisiveness in the underlying rights and problem orientations, not to the quality or success of the programs themselves (Ruíz, 1984).

Sustained use and development of English and of the home language are associated with a range of academic, linguistic, and cognitive benefits (Bialystok, 2011;

Callahan & Gándara, 2014; Menken, 2013). The forces against language-as-resource are purely political, supported or rebuffed depending on the program's intended audience (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Neeley, 2013). The number of immersion programs for native English speakers learning another language continues to grow, while there are fewer opportunities for EL students to maintain their native language as they learn English. The exception to immersion programs focused on native English speakers are dual immersion programs. Dual Immersion programs are designed to benefit both student groups (Tedick, Christian, & Fortune, 2011).

An example of pluralist/language-as-resource orientation is the 2014 LEAPS Act of Minnesota (Mariani Rosa & Torres-Ray, 2014). Williams and Gross Ebinger (2014) state that, as written, this is comprehensive legislation in support of English Learners, and although a high bar has been set, there remains a significant amount of work to be completed for full implementation to be realized.

Federal language policy has been shaped by both legislation and rulings from federal courts (Gándara & Rumberger, 2009) within both assimilationist and pluralist frameworks. Those supporting pluralist views have supported immigrant rights, including the right of students to receive an education in a language they understand. Those supporting assimilationist views have leaned toward more restrictive and English-only policies (Tollefson & Tsui, 2014; Wiley, Garcia, Danzig, & Stigler, 2014). Weak and inconsistent policies have undermined the ability to measure success and move forward in any one direction (Gándara & Rumberger, 2009).

The orientation adopted by decision makers is paramount, as it helps delimit the range of acceptable attitudes toward language and makes certain attitudes legitimate,

determining the context in which language is addressed (Johnson & Ricento, 2013; Ruíz, 2010). The influence of a specific language orientation reaches beyond development of language policy, as the orientation adopted will influence interpretation and implementation at both the macro and micro levels (de Jong et al., 2016; Ruíz, 1984; Zúñiga, 2016).

Macro to Micro Connections

Throughout history, those influencing the political landscape at the federal, state, and local levels have impacted language policy, positively or negatively (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Hopkins, 2016; Johnson & Johnson, 2015). There is general agreement among scholars in Language Policy and Planning that to fully comprehend how language policy works, one must understand the multiple levels or layers of the process (Hornberger, 2005; Johnson & Johnson, 2015; Menken & García, 2017). This process has been portrayed in a variety of ways, including micro-mezo-macro, top-down and bottom-up, explicit and implicit, overt and covert, and de jure and de facto (Hornberger, 2005; Johnson & Johnson, 2015; Menken & Garcia, 2017).

The history of formal language policy in education has typically been described using the macro to micro paradigm, in which those in positions of power are the policy makers, and those closest to the classroom are the implementers. Regardless of how the language policy process is portrayed, to fully understand the complexity of how language policy influences practice, it is essential to grasp the idea of multiple steps throughout the process and of divergent stakeholders who have the ability to influence the end result, the language policy.

Ricento and Hornberger (1996) described this process with the concept of a

metaphorical onion, the outer layer representing policy makers and the next layers representing various stakeholders in the process until the center of the onion—the school and classroom—is reached. The metaphorical onion can be used as a tool to understand the complexity of layers involved in the creation, interpretation, and appropriation of language policy at the classroom level and, in this way, has the potential to unpack the processes at each layer. Understanding the levels of policy development may provide valuable information that could help to close the achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs.

Minnesota Language Policy

In 2014, an important language support policy was passed in the Minnesota Legislature as a means to address long-standing inequities between EL students and their native English-speaking peers. The LEAPS Act has been referred to as one of the most comprehensive, researched-based, and forward-thinking policies in support of EL students in the US (King & Bigelow, 2017; Williams, 2016).

An overview of the bill illustrates the pluralist-based origins in language learning, as demonstrated in its three principal goals: 1) academic English proficiency; 2) content knowledge; and 3) multilingual skill development (Williams & Gross Ebinger, 2014). The bill presents multilingualism as an asset, sets a high bar for native language supports, includes PD for teachers and administrators in supporting EL students, and requires this PD for relicensure. The law has also been embedded into many existing statutes, including early childhood, curriculum and instruction, higher education, adult education, and teacher licensing. But while it is a significant step forward in improving the educational experience for EL students in Minnesota, the passing of the law is merely the

first step (Williams & Gross Ebinger, 2014).

Williams (2016) states that “the real value of any educational reform is not determined by its passage, but how its implementation shifts classroom practices that drive better outcomes for students” (p. 3). He then presents three categories to explain obstacles to implementation: insufficient resources, aspects of the law’s genesis and design, and lack of evidence that the MDE is prepared to oversee and support implementation of the law.

King and Bigelow (2017) also identify three areas of challenge to the implementation of LEAPS: sociopolitical, demographic, and cultural. They posit that the image of local culture, “Minnesota Nice,” has helped frame both the law’s development and the implementation process (King & Bigelow, 2017). A person who is “Minnesota Nice” is seen as courteous, reserved, and mild-mannered; the quality also includes polite friendliness, an aversion to confrontation, a tendency toward understatement, a disinclination to make a fuss or stand out, emotional restraint, and self-deprecation (Veldof & Bommema, 2014).

Additionally, King and Bigelow (2017) cite a number of ambiguities that make implementation difficult for those in charge, primarily for staff at the MDE. There is a lack of clarity regarding what is in the text of the law, its intention, and what is widely understood to be part of the law. Some professionals feel that the bar was set unrealistically high in this policy, and that some of the goals cannot be implemented as written (Williams & Gross Ebinger, 2014). The policy also contains many “opt outs,” with verbiage such as “encouraged to” and “where practicable,” as well as a general focus on English language proficiency as the ultimate goal, while native language

appears to be a means to an end. These concessions were largely the result of conflict avoidance or, the “Minnesota Nice” culture (King & Bigelow, 2017).

State Senator Patricia Torres Ray and State Representative Carlos Mariani Rosa, authors of the bill, worked for months collecting input from Minnesota stakeholders. They were understandably pleased about the bill passing, but felt from the start that it would be more a “setting of the stage to implementation” rather than a legislative victory (Williams, 2016).

LPP research has grown and developed since its inception, arguably beginning with Fishman and his work in the sociology of language (Fishman, 1985). The use of languages other than English has been through cycles of acceptance and rejection throughout the history of the US, notably in the field of education. Policies, both formal and de facto, have been created in support or opposition to native language instruction. Implementation of policy, however, has been inconsistent and has made measuring successful results difficult (Menken, 2008; Menken & García, 2017; Schmidt, 2000). To better understand how written language policy transforms into services and programs at the school level, it is important to understand the role of the principal as building leader and ultimate decision-maker responsible for policy implementation.

Administrator Knowledge of EL Policy and Practice

Research in school improvement has demonstrated that school leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school (Louis et al., 2010). Gurr (2015) has further defined the work of successful school leaders as the process of engaging within the school context to influence student and school outcomes through interventions in teaching and learning and

in school capacity building. At the same time, the role of school principal has increased in breadth and depth, expanding the critical responsibilities of principal far beyond that of building manager and enforcer of compliance (Lynch, 2012; Mendels, 2012). In the 2013 MetLife survey report, 75% of principals reported that the job had become too complex (MetLife, Inc., 2013).

Principal Professional Expectations

Research continues to demonstrate the importance of principal knowledge and support in school improvement efforts (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Mendels, 2012; Rousmaniere, 2013; Rowland, 2017; Louis et al., 2010). Given the magnitude of knowledge expected of school leaders, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) has assumed leadership of developing professional standards (formally known as ISLLC Standards) meant to define the nature and quality of the work of educational leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). Multiple sources of data including input from those in the field were applied to the development of the 2015 Principal Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), including a thorough review of empirical evidence, input from the 2008 standards supplied by over 1,000 school leaders and researchers, the day-to-day work of educational leaders and potential leadership demands of the future (NPBEA, 2015). The new standards exhibit a notable shift in acknowledging the central importance of human relationships, not solely in leadership but also in teaching and learning.

“The Standards reflect interdependent domains, qualities, and values of leadership work that research and practice suggest are integral to student success” (NPBEA, 2015, p. 3). Ten domains are included in the leadership standards: 1) Mission, Vision, and Core

Values; 2) Ethics and Professional Norms; 3) Equity and Cultural Responsiveness; 4) Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment; 5) Community of Care and Support for Students; 6) Professional Capacity of School Personnel; 7) Professional Community for Teachers and Staff; 8) Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community; 9) Operations and Management; and, 10) School improvement (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015).

Each domain contains a series of elements further describing the work necessary to meet the standard. Although these standards are applicable to all students, none directly mention English Learners, and just two of the total eighty-three elements mention language use. In addition, while cultural competency and culture are mentioned several times throughout the standards, they are not discussed specifically in terms of EL students.

The first mention of language falls under Standard Three, Equity and Cultural Responsiveness: “Confront and alter institutional biases of student marginalization, deficit-based schooling, and low expectations associated with race, class, culture and language, gender and sexual orientation, and disability or special status” (Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015, p. 11). The second mention of language is under Standard Five, Community of Care and Support for Students: “Infuse the school’s learning environment with the cultures and languages of the school community” (Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015, p. 13).

Although these standards are well researched and appropriate, they do not inform principals about specific services, programs, and policies to adequately support EL students. Instead, these standards support EL students under a broad cultural lens without

the distinction of linguistic diversity and a recognition of how language might be used in instructional settings. Many LPP researchers would argue that cultural awareness alone is not sufficient to meet the academic needs of EL students (Ascenzi-Moreno et al., 2016; Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Hult & Johnson, 2015; Nieto & Emerita, 2013; Wang, Odell, & Clift, 2010).

Research in Principal Knowledge of LPP Research and Outcomes

According to Hallinger and Murphy (2013), the US has experienced 30 years of nearly continuous education reform. Research in school improvement over this period has continued to illustrate the role of principals as key to successful reform (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013; Mulford & Silins, 2003; Louis et al., 2010). Additionally, many school systems have traditionally placed a higher priority on managerial efficiency and political stability than on instructional leadership as a way to avoid negative attention from central office staff (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013). Increasingly, school and district level leaders not only have the responsibility and authority to greatly influence program decisions but the power to shape the ways in which EL students are perceived and acknowledged (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Scanlan & López, 2012).

Much research in language policy and programming related to EL students has focused on the causes of and potential solutions to the widening achievement gap through an equity and social justice lens (Johnson, 2009; May, 2011, 2017). A growing database exists in the areas of capacity of the teacher workforce, methods or programming, and instructional practices such as blending language and content (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2002; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). However, the role of school administrators, has been overlooked in much of the research (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Ikemoto, 2014; Lo Bianco,

2014; Menken & García, 2017; Padron & Waxman, 2016; Scanlan & López, 2012).

Competing priorities faced by school principals in relation to how their time is spent remains a barrier in the shift to genuine instructional leadership (Beusaert et al., 2016; Friedman, 2002; Muse & Abrams, 2011; Wells, 2013; West et al., 2014).

In addition, administrative leadership has been influenced by policy changes at the national level, placing more emphasis on the role of principal as instructional leader. Yet even as this emphasis has increased (Louis et al., 2010), the long history of forces keeping principals away from this role have not been addressed (Goldring, Huff, May, & Camburn, 2008; Hallinger & Murphy, 2013). The day-to-day management of schools often conflicts with the tasks involved in true instructional leadership. The principal's typical workday has been described as "a continuous stream of brief, fragmented, problem-oriented interactions, most of which are initiated by others" (Hallinger & Murphy, 2013, p. 10). These kinds of interactions are ongoing throughout the day, keeping principals from completing the work required of an authentic instructional leader.

Scholars in the field also recognize other complex and often competing factors that may inhibit the implementation of focused language programming, professional development, teaching and learning materials, appropriate assessments, and the political climate (Scanlan & López, 2012). These factors underscore the need for principals to be innovative and efficient when designing and implementing services for EL students (Scanlan & López, 2012).

Ascenzi-Moreno, Hesson, and Menken (2016) found that principals are often responsible for the interpretation and appropriation of language policy and service

delivery at their sites, yet the area of principal leadership and language policy has received little attention. Studies in the area of school leadership and EL practices and policy are limited, and most conclude that school principals and other educational leaders possess an inadequate knowledge of EL programs and practices, even those programs they supervise (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Padron & Waxman, 2016; Scanlan & López, 2012). As a result, administrators may experience difficulty in perceiving the high-stakes decisions determined at the school level that have a profound impact on the educational success of EL students.

Padron and Waxman (2016) examined school principals' knowledge and perceptions of second language programs for EL students. In their study of 22 elementary schools, principals had the autonomy to choose and implement instructional programs. The authors found that most administrators lack the knowledge of effective instructional programs and practices to adequately determine the most appropriate program/services for their EL students. This limited understanding may impact principals' ability to be effective instructional leaders for second language learners and their teachers (Brooks, Adams, & Morita-Mullaney, 2010; Padron & Waxman, 2016).

Reeves and Tuyle (2014) explored the issue of principal knowledge and EL programming in Illinois. Due to recent legislation, principal preparation programs were required to provide coursework for future principals in meeting the needs of EL students. Through the examination of the new act and its provisions, researchers found the requirements to be wildly different depending on the number of EL students enrolled in each school. For schools with more than 200 students, the act mandates that the principal or those who direct EL programming hold a bilingual and/or ESL endorsement in

addition to the administrative license. For schools with fewer than 200 EL students the only requirement is the completion of two hours of PD per year (Reeves & Tuyle, 2014).

Scanlan and López (2012) suggest that the fundamental measure of success for school leaders is the academic success of traditionally marginalized students. Due to both cultural and linguistic differences, EL students and families are among the most marginalized groups. This marginalization of ELs appeared in the results of high-stakes NCLB testing data when subgroups of students fail to make adequate yearly progress and, as a result, schools were open to sanctions as well as negative local scrutiny. NCLB has been replaced by ESSA, changing the way in which data is reported; however, high stakes testing remains an integral part of US school improvement efforts. In this age of high stakes testing, the absence of thorough knowledge among school administrators regarding EL policies and services could be interpreted as a barrier to the development of programs that meet the academic and linguistic needs thus proficiency, of EL students (Brooks, Adams, & Morita-Mullaney, 2010).

Principals are not the only professionals with limited knowledge regarding the education of ELs. Many teachers do not feel qualified to teach EL students (de Jong, et al., 2018; Samson & Collins, 2012). In fact, fewer than one-third of US teachers have had a minimum of eight hours of PD focused on the teaching of EL students (Darling-Hammond, 2010). The lack of training for teachers makes leadership by principals even more important as they need to fully understand policy and practices specific to a school's EL students to support teachers in delivering effective instruction.

Language Policy Actors

Language planning and policy research has increasingly included the importance

of practitioners in the process of developing policy and practice. Ricento and Hornberger (1996) introduced the metaphoric “onion” to illuminate the complexity of the language planning and policy processes across national, institutional, and interpersonal layers. In this metaphor, language policies are the outer layer of the onion, while practitioners constitute the inner layers (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). Although this research was published over two decades ago, it is often referred to and built upon in current language planning and policy literature.

Johnson and Johnson (2015) argue that inclusive in a multilayered language policy process are imbalances of power among the actors involved. They use the term policy arbiters to define those holding disproportionate amounts of influence on language policy, and thus more control over language education programming. The level of knowledge possessed by the policy arbiters will most likely have a significant impact on the type of policy developed, as well as on the interpretation and appropriation of policy at the school level (Johnson & Johnson, 2015). Because building leaders are often put in the position of policy arbiter making complex decisions regarding school functioning, the need for principals to be well-versed in language policy and practice becomes ever more urgent.

Menken and García (2017) discuss the practice of deficit-based policy impacting classroom practices making those practices also deficit-based. These practices become ingrained and tend to persevere. They assert that the role of educators in policy implementation has been “undertheorized” in past and present research. They contend that educators must assume a much more active role in policy development and implementation and argue that education policies are used as mechanisms to create de

facto language practices in US schools, practices that are rarely interpreted in resource-rich contexts and typically present as restrictive to language minority students (Menken & Garcia, 2017).

Further, Menken and García (2010) state that the evolution of language policy research has shifted from national level language-as-problem view, to current interests in human agency and lived policies at the micro level.

. . .[A] newer wave of language education policy research that refocuses our attention from governments to local school administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community members—the so-called bottom of the educational policy structure—and which views language policies as far more multidimensional than written policy statements. (p.3).

As the attention to language policy turns to the local level, it becomes increasingly important for school leaders to be versed in policies and practices that better support EL students and families. Language policy research is becoming more locally centered on research in schools and classrooms. The bottom-up focus has begun to replace the top-down paradigm, making actions at the local level more influential in determining language policy implementation (Menken & Garcia, 2017).

An additional role of building principal is that of street-level bureaucrat. Demerath and Louis (2017) have described street-level bureaucrats, a phrase borrowed from Lipsky (Tummers & Bekkers, 2014), as those who interpret policy on the ground, through everyday practices, in order to meet the needs of various stakeholders (1980). The role of principal easily fits into this definition as principals are often responsible for defining and implementing policy at their schools for a variety of stakeholder groups who

are considered members of the school community. The manner in which each bureaucrat construes policy is likely to contain subtle differences in interpretation conforming with the school's current and ongoing work; schools will rarely implement policy identically. Demerath and Louis (2017) go on to say that "Street level bureaucrats are powerful because they have their finger on the pulse of local needs and resources, and it is this knowledge that shapes how they interpret policy and administrative protocol" (p. 454).

This body of research regarding principal knowledge of EL policies and practices, as well as the potential influence of this knowledge on implementation and appropriation of policy, sheds light on the many growing expectations held of building leaders. The decisions of a building administrator, though, may be the most influential factor in creating and sustaining quality language services for EL students (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Evans & Hornberger, 2005; Hallinger & Murphy, 2013; Johnson & Johnson, 2015; Menken & García, 2010).

Ideological and Implementational Spaces

Building principals, as the street-level bureaucrats of their schools, are tasked with interpreting policy as they strive to meet the expectations of various of stakeholder groups (Demerath & Louis, 2017). How principals interpret language policy as well as overall language needs will impact the services provided for EL students in their buildings. Variations exist in the manner in which principals conceptualize language education for EL students, thus providing opportunities to promote asset-based services that simultaneously adhere to regulations and provide opportunities for EL students (Hornberger, 2005; Menken & García, 2017). Hornberger (2005) refers to these opportunities as ideological and implementational spaces, opportunities that can prove to

be ephemeral windows of time (Hornberger, Tapia, Hanks, Dueñas, & Lee, 2018). The concept of ideological and implementational spaces is one not solely reserved for official policy, processes, actors, or agendas (Hornberger, 2005; Hornberger, Tapia, Hanks, Dueñas, & Lee, 2018). Implementational spaces are those spaces in which the practice takes place where taking an action is possible because an existing policy provides opportunity for asset-based service models. These spaces both inform and are informed by ideology. Implementational spaces can “extend beyond the classroom, at every level from face to face interaction in communities to national educational policies and, indeed, to globalized economic relations” (Hornberger, 2005, p. 606). In other words, there are many opportunities to influence how policies are interpreted at the school level.

Hornberger (2005) claims that her inspiration originated from Chick’s work (2002) with multilingualism in post-apartheid South Africa. Chick posits that new, multilingual language policies opened up ideological spaces making possible the alternative discourse regarding multilingualism among teachers (Chick, 2002). In a similar context, Albó (2000) concludes that Bolivia’s educational reform of 1994 opened up ideological and implementational spaces for heritage language education in several of the indigenous languages of Bolivia (as cited in Hornberger, 2005, p. 606).

Ideological and implementational spaces can be filled by the actions of policy makers as well as practitioners; subsequently, they may be opened or closed to language learning and the growth of heritage languages. Practitioners can play a large role in the implementation of multilingual practices and, through their actions, will potentially impact ideological beliefs. Practitioners may be able to create additional possibilities to increase linguistic opportunities. Hornberger (2018) further explains the concept with the

following:

. . . we draw on and develop the notion of ideological and implementational spaces as scalar, layered policies and practices influencing each other, mutually reinforcing, wedging, and transforming ideology through implementation and vice versa. This view of Language Policy and Planning (LPP) spaces as layered and scalar refers to permeation across and indexical relationships among different LPP spaces and levels, originally articulated in LPP as the metaphorical onion” (p.155).

The onion metaphor describes the LPP process as multilayered with different actors involved at each layer as they “ permeate and interact with each other in a variety of ways and to varying degrees” (Ricento & Hornberger, 1996, p. 402). Even with the assumed interaction, the players involved at the outer layers of the onion still have much greater influence on the process; even though they are farthest from the point at which policy is implemented (Hornberger, 2005; Hornberger et al., 2018). In application, teachers and principals in schools have the power to fill implementational spaces with programs that could impact ideological discourse and educational practice. When they are able to fill implementational spaces, they operate from the bottom-up, or from the inside of the metaphorical onion where those closest to the classroom are more engaged in decisions of school practice (Hornberger, 2005; Yamamoto & Hornberger, 1998).

Dueñas (2015) characterizes LPP research as concerned with, “examining different types of planning and policy making activities (status, corpus, and acquisition) across different processes (creation, interpretation, and appropriation)” (p. 22). Dueñas concurs with Hornberger and Recento (1996) regarding the use of the metaphorical onion

to describe multiple layers of policy with numerous actors embedded in each layer (Dueñas, 2015). In her analysis of multilingual policy in Peru, Dueñas (2015) further supports Hornberger's (2002) concept of filling in ideological and implementational spaces. In order to promote linguistic and cultural diversity for all, she claims that "as many actors as possible in as many layers as possible and in as many processes as possible constituting the LPP onion should be engaged in opening up spaces for multiple languages and identities" (Dueñas, 2015, p. 37).

Disbray (2016) researched the policy and practices of Aboriginal languages and dialects in Australia's Northern Territory (NT). She examined how spaces for language teaching and learning can be open or closed in remote areas of the NT, where over 100 languages and dialects are spoken. Ideological and implementational spaces were opened in 1974 when the Commonwealth government established a bilingual program for areas in the NT where up to 90% of Indigenous students speak an Indigenous language as their home language (Disbray, 2016). Since the inception of the program, options for service delivery are being taken away from school decision-makers. The implementational spaces have been narrowing and even closing due to increasing government attention to poor outcomes on national standardized assessments given in English (Disbray, 2016).

Disbray's conclusions regarding the response to the influence of high-stakes testing are similar to Menken's outcomes when researching effects of the implementation of the NCLB legislation passed into law in 2001 (Menken, 2008). In both instances, options to demonstrate academic proficiency became limited to English-only assessments. Students were no longer able to demonstrate mastery of content area knowledge in their first language; instead, standardized English assessments were

exclusively used to determine academic proficiency of bilingual students. (Menken, 2009; Menken & Solorza, 2014b). Both authors also found complex, interactive, and discrepant discourse in the role and importance of home language and English as modes of instructional delivery (Menken, 2009; Menken & Solorza, 2014b; Disbray, 2016). In other words, the information provided to decision makers regarding the use of multiple languages was inconsistent and confusing.

Implementational spaces exist between top-down policies and the manner in which they are enacted at the ground level. Practitioners and other stakeholder groups have the opportunity to create spaces for native language learning within the structure of services delivered at the school level. (Disbray, 2016; Evans & Hornberger, 2005; Menken, 2008; Yamamoto & Hornberger, 1998). Further, Hornberger (2005) suggests that implementational spaces created from the bottom up can wedge ideological spaces open, even when top-down policies begin to close them (Hornberger, 2005). Hornberger and Johnson (2007) claim that ethnography used in LPP research allows researchers to “. . . slice through the layers of the onion to reveal ideological and implementational spaces in which local actors implement, interpret, resist, and transform policy initiatives” (p. 527).

In Minnesota, the passing of the 2014 LEAPS Act opened up a large ideological space to support multilingual opportunities and further develop heritage or native languages (Mariani Rosa & Torres-Ray, 2014). In their leadership roles, principals have an option to initiate and support the filling up of implementational spaces with multilingual educational practices. A question yet unanswered is the extent to which the educational community in general, and principals specifically, have taken advantage of

the options for offering multilingual choices— expressly, the opening of implementational spaces to include native language instruction within the range of services provided to EL students.

Organizational Sensemaking

The origins of sensemaking reach back as far as the start of the twentieth century, though the first published mention of sensemaking in the organizational context is in Karl Weick's 1969 book, *The Social Psychology of Organizing*. This groundbreaking work has had a significant impact on the field of organizational studies and beyond (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). According to Weick, through sensemaking “people make sense of things by seeing a world on which they have already imposed what they believe” (1995, p. 15), and they “generate what they interpret” (Weick, 1995, p. 13). The action of sensemaking is triggered by ambiguous or uncertain events that disrupt our routines and force us to deal with them. Weick (2012) adds that sensemaking is stratified in organizations; fewer voices are heard at the lower levels of the organization.

Weick and his colleagues further describe sensemaking as the “. . . interplay of action and interpretation rather than the influence of evaluation on choice; when action is the central focus, interpretation, not choice, is the core phenomenon” (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 409). The phenomenon of interpretation rather than choice being at the core of decision-making is an important detail in administrative sensemaking. Still, sensemaking and interpretation are not synonymous: sensemaking involves “authoring as well as interpretation, creation as well as discovery” (Weick, 1995, p. 8). Further,

Sensemaking is about the ways people construct what they interpret.

Interpretation assumes a frame of meaning is already in place and that one simply needs to connect a new cue to an existing frame. It also assumes that one recognizes a need for the interpretation. Where there is no frame, or where there is no obvious connection between cues and frame and one has to be created, there is sensemaking. Consequently, sensemaking is concerned more with invention than with discovery; invention precedes interpretation (Sutcliffe, 2016, p. 1544).

Although Weick began his understanding of sensemaking with an emphasis on reflection, cognition, and causal maps (Weick & Bougon, 1986), he has further developed sensemaking from its strong cognitivist roots toward a more social constructivist perspective, one in which sensemaking means making something sensible, a more constructivist practice (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015).

Sensemaking has expanded in current academic literature to include numerous fields of study, as well as a wide range of definitions rendering existent interpretation of the concept challenging. There is no single definition, even when the focus is limited to sensemaking in organizational studies (Mantles & Christianson, 2014). Additionally, there is considerable variation in how sensemaking is used within similar definitions. In the past three decades, scholars have referred to it as a perspective, a process, a lens, a theory, and a framework. Several researchers point to the tension between cognitivist and constructivist strands of sensemaking as a source of ambiguity and contradiction within the field (Brown, Colville, & Pye, 2015; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2015). Yet, an emergent consensus is that sensemaking refers generally to those processes by which people seek plausibility to understand ambiguous, equivocal issues or confounding events (Brown et al., 2015).

The sensemaking literature demonstrates disagreement on several points. Of the three most common, the first difference in perspective concerns whether sensemaking takes place within or between individuals. Some define sensemaking as an individual, cognitive process for which the development of frameworks, schemata, and mental models are used to further define the process (Elsbach, Barr, & Hargadon, 2005; Klein & Moon, 2006). Others define it as a social process that occurs between people as meaning is negotiated, contested, and mutually constructed (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 2012).

The second area of disagreement pertains to the point at which sensemaking occurs. Some research points to its use in times of crisis or puzzlement (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld 2005), while others believe it could be easily incorporated into relatively mundane interactions and events (Gephart, Topal, & Zhang, 2011; Patriotta & Brown, 2011).

The third area of difference is the point in the process of decision-making when sensemaking actually occurs. Most researchers have focused on sensemaking as solely retrospective (Weick, 1995), though a growing body of literature suggests that it could be equally effective when the issue is future-oriented (Corley & Gioia, 2011).

Language learning and support tends to be a topic for which little training is provided in leadership development programs (DeMatthews, 2015; Johnson & Johnson, 2015; Menken, 2013; Menken & García, 2010). When principals are able to incorporate accurate knowledge into the components of their sensemaking, they can fill the implementational spaces available with value-added, language-as-resource services for EL students, likely leading to better long-term academic improvement.

Administrative Sensemaking in Educational Settings

“Sensemaking is a useful tool for examining school leadership because schools are complex organizations that receive conflicting messages and are subjected to misaligned policies” (DeMatthews, 2015, p. 140). Sensemaking literature in educational settings tends to focus on moderate change situations, a contrast to Weick’s original focus on crisis situations (Spillane, Diamond, Burch, Hallett, Jita, Zoltners, 2002; Walls, 2017). In education, sensemaking has been described as making meaning, “the cognitive act of taking in information, framing it and using it to determine actions and behaviors in a way that manages meaning for individuals” (Evans, 2007, p. 161). Specifically, principal sensemaking is “situated in their biographies, building histories, and roles as intermediaries between the district office and the classroom teacher” (Spillane et al., 2002, p. 731). Sensemaking theories have been used to examine principals’ values, beliefs, and how those variables influence actions and leadership practice (Coburn, 2001, 2005; DeMatthews, 2015; Evans & Hornberger, 2005; Spillane et al., 2002).

Walls (2017) draws heavily from Weick’s work on sensemaking to explore the cases of two schools that failed in the face of change, positing that sensemaking begins with a disruption to the status quo. Some disruptions rise to the level of crisis, though others do not evoke the same sense of urgency (Walls, 2017). Walls agrees with Maitlis and Christianson (2014) in the belief that, in education, the disruption is most often a change in school practice or policy (Walls, 2017; Maitlis & Christianson, 2014). Further, Walls (2017) states the importance of understanding the current state to be both an individually and socially created state, with contextual characteristics that shape the sensemaking process, including the level within the organization, freedom of dissent, and

the potential to create a series of additional interruptions.

In researching the dismantling of bilingual education programs post-NCLB in New York City, Menken (2013) focused on administrator sensemaking to ascertain the rationale for the near elimination of bilingual programs in the city. Due to the decentralization of schools, each principal was tasked with determining their school's language policy along with the instructional model, most choosing ESL program models rather than bilingual program models. Administrators in the study based their decisions on the results of low scores on high stakes accountability tests, presented in English and required by NCLB. Many of the principals shared the misconception that English-only programs will lead to faster English acquisition, and to better results on accountability measures. Principals blamed the poor test results on bilingual programs (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010).

Menken (2013) attributes the decisions made in New York City to principal beliefs about the value of language, language-as-problem rather than language-as-resource orientation. There is no evidence that English-only programs produce better results; in fact, the opposite is generally true (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010; Thomas & Collier, 2002). However, principals made their decisions regarding language policy and programming based on what made the most sense to them, believing that more English instruction leads to better and more quickly acquired English skills (Menken, 2013).

DeMatthews (2015) describes an example of sensemaking for a new principal in relation to the inclusion of students with special needs into the classroom, and how sociopolitical forces influenced how the principal understood and led her school. In this example, the principal assimilated information regarding issues with which she felt

comfortable and did not attend to other pressing issues, either because she was not comfortable addressing a particular issue, or because she did not recognize its importance (DeMatthews, 2015). These results support Weick's assertion that a crucial component of sensemaking is that we attend to some environmental input and ignore others (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Weick, 2012; Weick et al., 2005).

In Weick's view, organizations are stratified by nature, making fewer voices from the lower levels of the organization heard (Weick et al., 2005). This practice of stratification in sensemaking research is analogous to the metaphoric onion in language policy research. In the onion metaphor, decision makers tend to be those on the outer layers of the onion, ergo, the furthest away from the classroom (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007; Ricento & Hornberger, 1996). The results are the same; fewer voices from the lower levels of the organization are heard.

A challenge to the practice of having those furthest from the classroom create and control language policy is that policy-makers typically have limited understanding of language education and language learning leaving teachers and administrators at the school level to interpret and implement policy (Johnson & Johnson, 2015). Teachers and administrators may understand the implications of implementation but rarely receive training or guidance on how to interpret and implement language policy (Menken & García, 2017). They are forced to make sense from what they know and what they are directed to do, neither of which is sufficient to adequately make sense of language policy and transfer that policy into practice (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Menken & García, 2010). As the street-level bureaucrats, principals are knowledgeable regarding needs and resources in their buildings. Combining this knowledge with research regarding best

practices for EL students, principals could be much more informed when implementing policy and practices for EL students, potentially filling the implementational spaces that arise with asset-based options for language learners.

Language policies are interpreted in varying manners at both the creation and appropriation stages leaving much room for unique interpretations of the same policy (Johnson, 2009). Furthermore, the language policy process is multilayered and involves an unequal distribution or imbalance of power (Johnson & Johnson, 2015; Menken & Solorza, 2014a). This imbalance creates policy arbiters, those maintaining a disproportionate amount of influence in decision-making. In the Johnson and Johnson (2015) study, researchers focused on administrators at the district level, (i.e., policy arbiters) regarding their beliefs about language, language education, and educational research. The findings suggest that policy arbiters use language research tactically to support their pre-existing positions on the value of linguistic diversity and bilingual education, further demonstrating the importance of administrator knowledge and the essential role of informed decision-makers (Johnson & Johnson, 2015).

Sensemaking is sometimes described as the making of sense, though it is much more complicated (Sutcliffe, 2016). “Sensemaking theory provides insight into how individuals and collectives carve out cues in their environments, give meaning to (i.e., interpret) these cues and translate these interpretations into actions” (Sutcliffe, 2016, p. 1544). The body of research regarding sensemaking in organizations is growing (Brown et al., 2015) as is that of research specific to education and sensemaking (Coburn, 2001, 2005; DeMatthews, 2015; Evans & Hornberger, 2005; Spillane et al., 2002). However, when pinpointing language policy and planning in the sensemaking literature, available

research is limited (Johnson & Freeman, 2010; Menken, 2013; Spillane et al., 2002).

Expanding research in sensemaking may be valuable in understanding how principals, i.e. street-level bureaucrats, use sensemaking to determine practice for ELs in their schools and take advantage of the implementational spaces available to create asset-based services designed to accelerate learning of EL students. The information gleaned from such research may help in narrowing the achievement gap between EL students and their peers.

Gaining additional information regarding principal sensemaking in this setting could uncover factors in processing that lead principals to determine the services offered to ELs at the school site. In other words, this study may illuminate the knowledge, beliefs, and actions that could lead from policy to implementation at the building level through the lens of principal.

Information regarding decision making with principals could augment current research regarding factors influencing EL services and, therefore, assist in improving the academic achievement of EL students. Furthermore, having this information may assist district administration and additional decision makers in identifying the needs of principals as they work to provide high quality programs and services for English Learners.

Discussion

Teachers and administrators have increasingly become de facto language policy makers in their schools and classrooms, though they have rarely received PD regarding language policy and planning (Menken & García, 2017). Administrators across the country are guiding the development of services for EL students while determining what

supports will be offered at their schools. Unfortunately, there tends to be limited information to support principals in making these decisions, and school leaders are left to interpret and implement language policy to the best of their ability and beliefs (Johnson & Freeman, 2010; Johnson & Johnson, 2015), or, in other words, according to what makes sense to them.

Leaders are expected to make sense of multiple, overlapping, and, at times, conflicting information to make decisions about the education of the EL students they serve, largely with very little training or guidance (Rowland, 2017; Wallace Foundation, 2016). In addition, they must be able to articulate and shape the meaning of issues and events with and for stakeholders, as well as provide details and rationale for the decisions made (Evans, 2007). The ways in which school administrators make important decisions regarding ELs by making sense of the information provided regarding EL students and services, combined with their own beliefs has not held a prominent place in the literature.

Although there are many avenues to pursue in expanding the field of leadership and LPP research, one of the most common topics cited as a gap area by researchers is the connection between language policy interpretation, appropriation, and implementation at both the macro and micro levels within systems (de Jong et al., 2016; Johnson & Johnson, 2015; Menken & García, 2017; Ricento, 2014). Policy is frequently produced at the top levels of an organization and delivered to those who will oversee the implementation. In the case of school language policy, it is arguably the principal and teachers who make the most relevant decisions in respect to how the policy will be interpreted and implemented at the local, school level (Johnson, 2013; Johnson & Freeman, 2010; Scanlan & López, 2012).

In her work regarding policy analysis, Alexander (2013) describes the term policy analysis as somewhat misleading and proposes the term problem analysis in its place. “The policy analysis does not begin with policies that have already been in place; it begins with a recognition that a fundamental condition needs to be changed” (Alexander, 2013, p. 29). It is essential to begin the process with the identification of the problem, an extremely complex task. According to Alexander (2013), problems are difficult to define as they are interdependent, defining them can be subjective, defining the problem can feel artificial, and the nature of the problem is ever changing (p. 50).

The manner in which language policy is defined, as an asset or a deficit, will likely create very distinct outcomes. The language orientation adopted by the policy analysts and policy makers will determine how the problem is to be defined; is the “problem” the underachievement of EL students, or is the “problem” that of language diversity? The language support policies and practices chosen to be implemented in our schools will have a large impact on improving or impeding the academic success of EL students (Ma, 2002).

The interaction between policies and implementation are most likely to occur at the school level where the major decision maker is the principal. These three bodies of work together support understanding of how the interpretation, implementation, and appropriation of service delivery models for EL students are viewed through the lens of the principal. Evans (1999) articulated the importance of principal involvement in school improvement years ago with the following statement, “No reform efforts, however worthy, survives a principal’s indifference or opposition” (Evans 1999 as cited in Hope & Pigford, 2001, p. 41). This is still true today as multiple improvement efforts confuse and

detract from each other, potentially decreasing the value of all.

Elements Emerging from the Literature Review

Four organizing themes arose from the literature review as factors in principal sensemaking for EL education. Figure 2 below depicts the bi-directionality of each of these themes or elements in the process of sensemaking:

1. Knowledge of state and federal guidelines
2. Principal beliefs
3. Program models and services
4. Professional development

The first element, knowledge of state and federal guidelines, was often mentioned in the principal understanding of policy and practices body of work in the literature review (Ascenzi- Moreno et al., 2016; Padron & Waxman, 2016; Scanlan & López, 2012; Menken, 2017). Researchers studying the role of principals in relation to ELs contend that it is essential for principals to be knowledgeable about policies and practices in order to make informed decisions for EL education (Padron & Waxman, 2016; Scanlan & López, 2012). In essence, principals are informed by their knowledge of state and federal guidelines in decision making. If there are gaps in their knowledge, learning more about guidelines could change the information used to make decisions.

The second element, principal beliefs, was uncovered in the sensemaking literature. According to Weick, “people make sense of things by seeing a world on which they have already imposed what they believe” (1995, p. 15). Beliefs are a key component of sensemaking. This element, like the first, is also bi-directional. Principals employ their beliefs when making decisions; although, an informational intervention could alter

beliefs, thus changing the information used in decision making.

The third element, implementation of program services and models, was highlighted in the principal knowledge literature as well as implied in the sensemaking literature regarding decision making. Weick (1995) stated that in addition to people imposing what they believe, they “generate what they interpret” (p. 13). The creation and implementation of EL programs are an interpretation of what principals believe. In the other direction, a program already in place may influence what a principal believes to be the right program model, especially if there is no further information from which to draw.

The fourth element, professional development, was present in each of the bodies of research in the literature review. Learning through PD can impact what one believes or knows. However, if one is aware of their lack of knowledge, it may also propel a leader to investigate professional development opportunities that, in turn, may change his or her beliefs. (see figure 2 below)

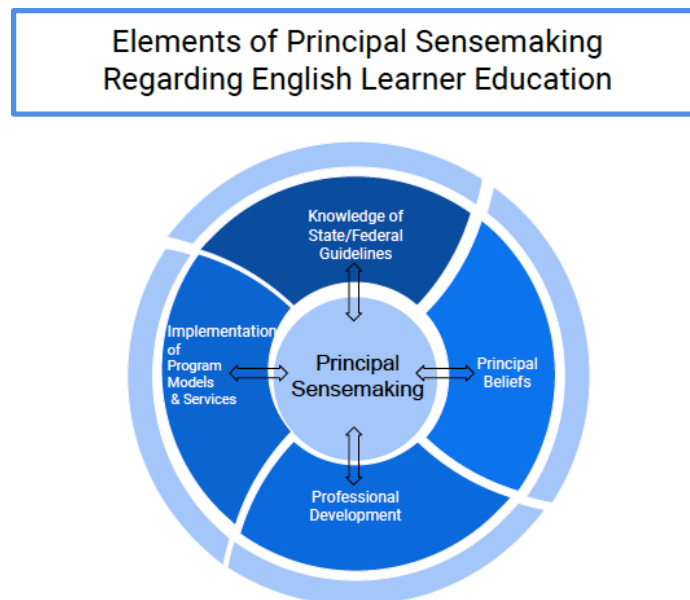


Figure 2: Elements Reflecting Principal Sensemaking Regarding English Learner Education

Summary

These four elements are key components of this research study. It is through these themes within the literature, reviewed apart and woven together, that help in understanding how principals make decisions about EL programs and services in their schools. Sensemaking is the lens through which these elements are addressed. This study seeks to understand the information principals use in making decisions regarding EL learning through the study of principal knowledge, beliefs, professional development, and programs and services.

Chapter 3

Research Design and Methodology

Overview

This study used a mixed methods design, with a combination of surveys and interviews, to capture a broad perspective of principal sensemaking in regard to the education of English Learner students, addressing the following research questions:

1. What do Minnesota principals report to know about EL language policy and practice?
2. What professional development opportunities specific to the education of English Learners do Minnesota Principals report to have engaged in within the past five years?
3. How are federal, state, and district EL language policies reportedly implemented by principals at the school level?

As seen in Figure 1 in the introduction of this paper, the components from the literature review include the social and historical context of language planning and policy, along with the understanding among principals of research, policy, and practices related to ELs. The intersection of these two bodies of literature is where principals make sense of those components. From that intersection, the literature review revealed four elements as factors influencing principal sensemaking regarding the education of EL students. Again, these elements are as follows:

1. Knowledge of state and federal guidelines
2. Principal beliefs

3. Professional development
4. Program models and services

Knowledge of state and federal guidelines refers to what principals claim to know and understand about policies, laws, and practices nationally, at the state level, and at the local district level in regard to EL education. Beliefs are a significant component of sensemaking and reflect the ways in which people construct meaning from what they interpret. Professional development in this study indicates the learning opportunities in which principal and school staff have participated that are specific to the education of EL students. Program models and services refer to the specific type of support provided for EL students and their families. See Figure 2 for a visual representation of these elements, all of which are factors involved in principal sensemaking.

Study design. This study incorporates a mixed methods design in which both qualitative and quantitative data were collected, analyzed, and used to understand a research problem. This study represents what Teddlie and Tashakkori refer to as a QUAN + qual, multi- strand parallel mixed design (2009). The QUAN + qual portion denotes a study incorporating quantitative methods as the dominant design, and qualitative methods as a secondary approach. The term *parallel mixed design* is similar to what others refer to as *simultaneous or concurrent designs* (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Morse, 2003). The difference in wording provides more conceptual inclusivity, as the terms concurrent and simultaneous imply both methods of data collection occurring at exactly the same time. The term *parallel design* provides some flexibility in that the collections occur either simultaneously or with a short time lapse (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). *Multi-strand* refers to the practice of using more than one method throughout the stages of the

study. Inferences based on the results from each strand, quantitative and qualitative, are integrated to form meta-inferences reflecting study findings.

According to Creswell, (2015) results from the analysis of both datasets are compared, and the researcher makes an interpretation as to whether the results support or contradict each other. The advantage of this design is that each data collection type strengthens the other and offsets its weaknesses, resulting in a more complete understanding of a research problem (Creswell, 2015).

Ponce and Pagán-Maldonado (2015) propose that the advantage of using a mixed methods design in educational research is its strength in approaching complex educational phenomena where both qualitative and quantitative methods lead to distinctive and complementary kinds of data. Leonard (2003) notes that interviews “. . . may be used as a follow up to a questionnaire. This allows the researcher to explore in more depth interesting issues that may have emerged from the standard questionnaire” (p. 3). In this study, interviews were used in the manner suggested by Leonard (2003) to give more context to the survey findings.

Data Collection

To inform the research questions, this study used a survey and individual interviews. The principal survey was administered first. From that survey, volunteers were recruited to participate in the interview.

Principal Survey. The study sample was drawn from Minnesota principals who are members of either the Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP) or the Minnesota Elementary School Principal Association (MESPA). Approximately 97% (n= 130) of secondary school principals in Minnesota are members

of MASSP, while approximately 87% (n=866) of elementary school principals in Minnesota are members of MESPA.

A link to the survey was sent to all members through executive directors of both principal organizations. An explanation of the voluntary nature of the survey, general goals of the research, and a statement of confidentiality were included in the communication. Survey responses were categorized by the respondent's area of the state (urban, suburban, or rural) and whether it was an elementary or secondary school. The goal of this monitoring was to assure representation of the different geographic locations and grade configurations of schools within Minnesota.

The survey was adapted from The English Language Learner Program Survey for Principals (Grady & O'Dwyer, 2014), developed through a partnership with the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE) and the Institute of Educational Sciences (IES). The original survey was used to gather information about school-level policies and practices for educating ELs, the types of PD principals have received relating to educating this group of students, principals' familiarity with state and federal guidelines and standards for educating EL students, and principals' beliefs about the education of EL students. The original survey team was composed of researchers from the Regional Educational Laboratory Northeast and Islands (REL-NEI) and was created for use in Rhode Island. A related study involving principals and their knowledge of EL policies and practices also used the REL-NEI survey as a template for their Texas research (Padron & Waxman, 2016).

For this study, sections of the original survey were omitted as they were not related to the research questions in the study. Items omitted included questions about

response to intervention (RTI), EL students and learning disabilities, and EL teacher evaluation. The questions for this current study were also edited to reflect Minnesota as the locale. The revised survey was then field-tested by three principals in the metro area to provide feedback regarding the content of questions, the flow of questions, and how long it took to complete. A couple of minor changes were made to the wording in the survey from the principal feedback. The complete survey can be found in Appendix A.

Principal Interview. The principal interview questions were derived from the survey described above. For recruitment, the final survey question asked for volunteers willing to participate in an interview and provided researcher contact information. Interviewees could choose to be interviewed in person or via phone interview. The interviews began soon after the survey window closed allowing all participants who completed the survey the opportunity to participate in the interview. The interviewee group was asked to identify their site as either elementary or secondary, and to identify their school as being located in an urban, suburban, or rural area of Minnesota. The interviews were audio taped, transcribed, and coded based on the four elements reflecting principal sensemaking in relation to the education of EL students: knowledge of state and federal guidelines, principal beliefs, program models and services, and PD opportunities. Transcription was conducted in two parts. The researcher used TRINT software to complete the first level of transcription. Those transcriptions were then hand corrected using the audio interviews as a guide to assure accurate transcriptions. The interviews were then color coded based the four elements of sensemaking listed above. Principal comments were grouped under headings reflecting the four elements identified in this study as elements involved in principal sensemaking.

The interview questions were designed to go into depth beyond that of the survey questions, with an emphasis on principal sensemaking and beliefs regarding EL students and related services. Questions regarding principal perceptions and expectations of potential changes due to the Minnesota LEAPS Act (Mariani Rosa & Torres-Ray, 2014) and the federal-level Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requirements (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2015) were also included. Questions included in the interview protocol for this study served as a guide in conducting semi-structured interviews focused on the four elements reflecting principal sensemaking regarding EL Education. Two interview questions centered on PD, three asked about principal beliefs about EL education, two addressed program models and services for ELs, and one asked about knowledge of state and federal guidelines. The complete interview protocol can be found in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, including percentages of responses to the survey questions, allowed the researcher to see differences in the strength of each response. In addition, crosstab analysis, statistical tests that allow multivariate analysis on two or more variables at a time, were calculated to provide a side-by-side comparison of how different groups of respondents answered survey questions. These analyses allowed the researcher to examine relationships within the data that might not be readily apparent when using descriptive statistics alone to report findings. In this study, a cross tab analysis was used to show the relationship, or lack thereof, between two or more survey questions.

The findings from these two data collection approaches were used to identify points of agreement or contradiction regarding the research questions. Responses to the

survey questions represent the quantitative data. Descriptive statistics provide the percent of each response to the array of choices in each question. Inferential statistics were used in the form of crosstab analysis as described above. The principal interviews, plus the open-ended responses on the survey, represent the qualitative data and were coded using a thematic content analysis from the research questions, using the elements in Figure Two as a guide.

Summary

This study used a mixed methods approach in data collection to explore, describe, and interpret principal sensemaking regarding EL education. A survey was used to measure principal sensemaking in relation to EL education organized by four elements: knowledge of state and federal guidelines, principal beliefs, program models and services, and professional development. The survey was offered to all members of MASSP and MESPA through executive director communications. Interviews were then conducted with a smaller set of survey respondents who agreed to be interviewed. The interviews allowed the researcher to more extensively explore issues that may have emerged from the survey data. Results from the two datasets were analyzed to discover relationships among and between the interview and the survey data.

Chapter 4

Findings

Introduction

This research study focused on three research questions:

1. What do Minnesota principals report to know about EL language policy and practice?
2. What professional development opportunities specific to the education of English Learners do Minnesota Principals report to have engaged in within the past five years?
3. How are federal, state, and district EL language policies reportedly implemented by principals at the school level?

These questions were addressed through principal surveys and interviews. Responses are categorized based on four elements influenced by the literature review as factors reflecting principal sensemaking regarding English Learner (EL) education: knowledge of state/federal guidelines, principal beliefs, program models and services, and professional development.

Respondents

The Executive Directors of the two Minnesota principal associations, MASSP and MESPA, shared the request to participate in the study through their communication networks, providing the opportunity for all members to participate. A total of 109 principals signed on to the survey, although only 78 fully completed it. Total responses to each survey question ranged from 72 to 85 as not all participants answered every question. Survey responses were monitored by respondent's self-identified area of the

state: urban, suburban, or rural, and whether it was an elementary or secondary school. Respondents included 29 elementary principals and 47 secondary principals. By area of the state, respondents included 31 rural, 28 suburban, and 15 urban principal participants. The majority of respondents, 79% (n=58), reported more than five years of experience as a principal, 8% (n=6) reported four to five years, 5% (n=4) two to three years, and 7% (n=4) reported one year or less. In reporting the approximate percentage of EL students in their building, 41% (n= 30) of respondents reported 5– 20% of their school population as EL, 39% (n=29) reported less than 5%, and 5% (n=3) reported 31–50%. Only one respondent (1%) reported ELs to be over 50% of the total school population. (See Table 1 below)

	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Total
Elementary	11	12	5	29
Secondary	20	16	10	47
Years of Experience				
More than 5 years of principal experience	28	21	9	58
4-5 years of principal experience	1	3	2	6
2-3 years of principal experience	0	2	2	4
1 year or less principal experience	2	1	2	5
% of EL students Enrolled				
Less than 5%	15	12	2	29
5-20%	14	11	5	30
21-30%	2	3	6	11
31-50%	0	2	1	3
Over 50%	0	0	1	1

Table 1: Characteristics of Principal Survey Respondents and Student Populations

Interviews were conducted to complement the survey data. Participants volunteered by responding to a request at the end of the survey. Of the twelve interviewees, six represented elementary schools, and six represented secondary schools. Those interviewed included six urban principals, four rural principals, and two suburban principals. Participants could choose to be interviewed in person or via telephone: six chose in person and six chose a phone interview. The duration of the interviews was from 20-40 minutes. Responses were recorded, transcribed, and coded utilizing the four elements related to the research questions reflecting principal sensemaking specific to EL learners.

Principal Number Assigned	School Level Elementary or Secondary	Area of State Urban, Suburban, Rural
1	Secondary	Rural
2	Secondary	Rural
3	Elementary	Suburban
4	Elementary	Urban
5	Elementary	Rural
6	Elementary	Urban
7	Elementary	Suburban
8	Elementary	Urban
9	Secondary	Urban
10	Secondary	Urban
11	Secondary	Urban
12	Secondary	Urban

Table 2: Principal Respondents Identified by Number and School Characteristics

Findings

The information presented below reflects the data gathered by survey and interview responses. The findings are described in each of four sections reflecting principal sensemaking regarding English Learner education. Each section presents an element identified by the literature review as a factor in principal sensemaking. The four sections include: Knowledge of State and Federal Guidelines, Beliefs, Professional Development, and Program Models and Services.

Knowledge of State and Federal Guidelines

How principals interpret policy can have a large impact on policy implementation at the school level and rarely do two people understand and implement policy in the same way (Johnson & Johnson, 2015; Menken & Solorza, 2015). Further, it is the principal who is ultimately responsible for the implementation of policy at the school level (Hope & Pigford, 2001; Johnson & Johnson, 2015; Menken & Solorza, 2014). In consideration of the role played by the school principal, survey questions asked respondents to state their level of familiarity with Minnesota Department of Education guidelines, as well as broader policies and practices implemented nationally with regard to EL education. In the survey, principals responded to the questions by selecting one of four responses: not very familiar, slightly familiar, very familiar, and extremely familiar. The interview questions were focused on the implementation of services and whether district, state, or national policies and practices shaped their understanding of the learning and education of ELs.

While the majority of principals in this study reported limited knowledge of state and federal guidelines specific to EL education, there was variability among responses. The survey item generating the lowest level of familiarity in this section was the

Minnesota LEAPS Act with only 8% of principals reporting being “very” familiar and “extremely” familiar with the 2014 Act. Guidelines requiring the reporting of information to MDE, such as EL screening procedures and entrance and exit criteria, demonstrated the most familiarity with principals reporting 34% and 30% respectively as “extremely” or “very” familiar with these guidelines. Additionally, approximately one fourth of principals reported to be “extremely” or “very” familiar with the questions addressing equitable access to education including translation and interpretation services.

The programmatic questions as a group generated the lowest levels of familiarity, with 90% of principals in this study reporting to be “not very” or “slightly” familiar with Minnesota language delivery frameworks. Included in the programmatic questions were ones which asked about the number of students necessary to require a specialized language program. Ninety-two percent of respondents were “not very” or “slightly” familiar with those requirements and 86% were “not very” or “slightly” familiar with EL program standards concerning specialized language instruction.

Interviewees were asked if state and federal guidelines help shape their understanding of EL education and the majority responded that they did not (67%). None of the respondents interviewed referred to district level policy or practice as a resource for understanding the education of EL students. The following are a sample of responses to interview questions that illustrate principal knowledge regarding policies and practices that shape EL education and program development at the school level:

“I’m not super familiar with the laws and the state and federal policies around English Language Learners other than they exist.” (#7, suburban elementary)

“To be honest with you, I didn’t even know about them.” (#11, urban, secondary)

“No.” [in response to the question, do state and federal policies shape your understanding of EL education?] (# 4, suburban, elementary)

“I would look at ESSA, that is the only thing that I have looked at that has shaped my knowledge. The other acts I am not familiar with. Just understanding within ESSA how we have to identify and support students, but specifically EL, it hasn’t helped at all.” (# 10, urban, secondary)

“... a couple of them I don’t know, I had not heard of before. World’s Best Workforce I guess in a very broad sense. Probably the one that I have had some familiarity with is title, [Q: Which title?] Title III.” (# 2, rural secondary)

Both survey and interview data together align in demonstrating a low level of knowledge of EL state and federal guidelines as reported by principals. The policies and practices requiring accountability to MDE or the US Department of Education showed higher levels of familiarity than those that were not, although familiarity with those requiring some level of accountability was reported by fewer than one third of respondents.

As can be inferred by the survey data presented in Table 3 below, most principals do not use state and federal guidelines to understand EL education, as most are unfamiliar with specific state and federal policy and guidelines regarding EL education. There also appears to be a lack of information specific to EL education from district level administration. It would be beneficial to further understand on what or with whom principals rely to make decisions regarding the education/program development of ELs in their schools.

Survey Question Topics	Extremely Familiar and Very Familiar	Not Very Familiar and Slightly Familiar
Minnesota Guidelines		
EL entrance and exit criteria	n= 22 (30%)	n=51 (70%)
Minnesota Language Survey	n=15 (21%)	n=57 (79%)
Minnesota Language Education Delivery Frameworks	n=7 (10%)	n=66 (90%)
EL program standards concerning specialized language instruction	n=10 (14%)	n=63 (86%)
The Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success Act (LEAPS Act)	n=6 (8%)	n=67 (92%)
Number of EL students needed to require specialized language program	n=9 (13%)	n=63 (92%)
EL program standards concerning equitable access to services and materials	n=19 (26%)	n=57 (74%)
EL screening procedures	n=25 (34%)	n=48 (66%)
Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)	n=16 (22%)	n=57 (78%)
Translation and interpretation requirements	n=22 (30%)	n=51 (70%)
Minnesota Bilingual and Multilingual Seals and World Language Proficiency Certificates	n=9 (12%)	n=64 (88%)
National Guidelines		
World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) English Language Development Standards	n=29 (39%)	n=45 (61%)
Interpreting scores from the ACCESS for ELs (English proficiency assessment)	n=27 (36%)	n=47 (64%)
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) EL component	n=23 (31%)	n=51 (69%)

Table 3: Principal Knowledge of State and Federal Guidelines

Principal Beliefs

Weick (1995) states that beliefs are an essential component of sensemaking, as through sensemaking “people make sense of things by seeing a world on which they have already imposed what they believe” (p. 15). The element of principal beliefs was addressed in the survey through a range of questions regarding language acquisition and the teaching of EL students (see Table 4 below). Interviews followed up with questions to discover who principals believe to be responsible for the education of ELs and what they believe to be the best way to teach ELs.

Findings from both survey and interview data indicate a strong belief by principals that everyone in the school is responsible for the education of EL students, with 100% of interviewees and 99% of survey respondents reporting that belief. Only 82% of principals reported that classroom teachers needed special training in order to meet the needs of EL students. A sample of interview responses follow:

“Everybody. Everybody is responsible for teaching EL kids. I think of our EL teacher as just having a specialty and understands how to help other professionals educate them.” (# 1, rural, secondary)

“So, we’ve got to change the mindset of classroom teachers that, no, you have a role. You are the first level instructor, you’re tier one.” (# 3, suburban, elementary)

“Everybody who is working with EL student’s needs to have a basic understanding of how to provide instruction that kids are going to be able to understand.” (#6, urban, elementary)

“Everyone. It’s not a silo.” (# 11, urban, secondary)

There was also strong agreement in the area of cultural knowledge of students and

families. Principals believe that understanding the cultural backgrounds of EL students leads to more effective teachers and that teachers should be trained in culturally responsive educational practices. Survey responses in this area demonstrated 99-100% agreement.

The majority of Minnesota principals participating in the survey believe that the development of student's native language is important to attaining English literacy. Survey results showed 98% of principals "agreed" or "strongly agreed" to the statement: "The acquisition of English is aided by the development of native language literacy," and 86% "agreeing" or "strongly agreeing" to the statement: "Teaching ELs to read in their native language promotes higher levels of reading in English." In contrast, 42% of respondents believe that ELs learn best when immersed in an English-only environment, creating overlap in those two distinct viewpoints.

The contrasting responses regarding the support of native language instruction on the one hand and, at the same time, the support of English-only environments on the other, requires some reflection in understanding how two seemingly opposite beliefs could be held by the same person, as the overlap suggests. Reviewing these responses through the principal sensemaking framework in Figure 1 can help to make sense of this contradiction. In applying sensemaking theory, principal sensemaking in relation to EL education is primarily influenced by social and historical contexts of language planning, as well as principal understanding of EL research, policy, and practice. Where those two bodies of information intersect, as seen in Figure 1, is the principal's current world view and where sensemaking occurs.

In sensemaking theory, when information is limited and there is no frame of

reference to create a connection, people will make sense of a new experience through what they already know and believe (Weick et al., 2005). In this situation, principals demonstrated limited knowledge of policies and practices for ELs and, as such, had to rely on what they knew and what they believed. It may seem to make sense that the more English one is exposed to, the greater fluency in English one will demonstrate. Research, however, has shown that students develop stronger skills when native language is incorporated as a part of the academic program (Collier & Thomas, 2017; Cummins, 1992). Thus, principals may be experiencing mixed messages when making sense of service delivery models and may then reach the conclusion believing both views to be correct.

Principals interviewed were asked what they believe to be the best way to teach EL students. All principals interviewed stated that it was dependent on the needs of the student. Following the caveat of differentiation of services based on need, specific responses identified a combination of push-in and pull-out services as the best way to teach EL students, with 38% (12 of 32 responses) of responses supporting this combination of ESL services. Additional information regarding programs and services available for principals will be provided in the professional development section later in this chapter. A sample of responses from interviewees regarding the best way to teach ELs is below:

“Well, it would be foolish for me to paint them with one brush.” (#5, suburban, elementary) “. . . so it’s meeting the kids where they’re at. Some kids are going to need more hands on and some would be OK with minimal support.” (#11, urban, secondary)

“ . . . I will say that the best way is to first of all understand where they are coming from. Build a relationship with them. Don’t confuse social justice with PD or creating low expectations. They should be treated and taught as every other student.”

(#12, urban, secondary)

“I do believe that a co-teaching model where there is a really good relationship between special ed, the EL teacher, and the regular teacher is helpful. And, being exposed to that great, rich language of the classroom is good; obviously sheltered instruction has a place.” (#4, suburban, elementary)

“I think it’s got to be a combination of immersion in the regular ed. classroom—‘I’m getting exposure, I’m learning’—and then I think there needs to be pull-out learning where an EL student is grouped with peers at their same level getting the direct instruction they need by an ESL teacher.” (#3, suburban, elementary)

When asked if services for EL students were given the same priority as other mandated services (i.e., special education services), 58% (7 of 12) responded affirmatively. For two of the five principals reporting that EL services were not given the same priority, they also stated that they thought they were “getting close.” A sample of interview responses to the program priority question follow:

“I don’t know this from a legal standpoint, but you get by with not necessarily providing the level of services that are needed by EL kids . . . with special education there is much more attention and scrutiny and fear of litigation and advocacy that might cause litigation. . . . I think schools and educators can get by skimping on the EL kids at times.” (#2, rural, secondary)

“Priority is shifting more toward services for EL students as the numbers grow.” (#9,

urban, secondary)

“Honestly, it’s just so ingrained, it’s how we do business. . . I don’t think it is held in any less regard than anything else we do for kids.” (#5, rural, elementary)

“I think people are doing the best they can and getting to those kids the best they can, but it’s probably not as tight. But I would say pretty close.” (#7, suburban, elementary)

“No. I don’t think they are prioritized. I think it’s something buildings are left to figure out without specific direction.” (#10, urban, secondary)

In sum, these findings suggest that principals believe that the responsibility of EL education belongs to all, however, there appears to be some disconnect regarding how that belief is enacted at the school level. Teaching practices designed to meet the academic and linguistic needs of EL students is secondary to those addressing cultural awareness, as reported by principals regarding professional development for teachers. Additionally, although native language instruction is reported to be important, most principals reported having ESL programs in their buildings without native language support. The survey questions addressing principal beliefs with corresponding responses can be found in Table 4 below.

Question	Agree and Strongly Agree	Disagree and Strongly Disagree
Language Acquisition for ELs		
ELs learn English best when they are immersed in an English only environment	n=35 (42%)	n= 49 (58%)
For both ELs and native English speakers, the acquisition of academic English is critical	n=84 (99%)	n=1(1%)
Teaching ELs to read in their native language promotes higher levels of reading in English	n=72 (86%)	n=12 (14%)

The acquisition of English is aided by the development of native language literacy	n=83 (98%)	n=2 (2%)
Language proficiency is a measure of oral language only	n=9 (11%)	n=75 (89%)
Providing native language support for ELs slows the acquisition of English	n=12 (14%)	n=73 (86%)
ELs who speak English fluently should be exited from EL services	n= 14 (17%)	n=69 (83%)
Teaching ELs		
Teachers are most effective when they understand the cultural backgrounds of their EL students	n=85(100%)	n=0 (0%)
When teaching content to ELs, teachers should modify their instruction to account for EL students' level of proficiency in the language of instruction	n=74 (87%)	n=11 (13%)
EL language development and academic success is the responsibility of all teachers	n=84 (99%)	n=1 (1%)
Teachers who are not certified ESL or bilingual teachers but have ELs in their classrooms need special training to effectively teach ELs	n=70 (82%)	n=15 (18%)
ESL and classroom teacher collaboration and co-planning has a positive impact on EL achievement	n=85 (100%)	n=0 (0%)
If a teacher is effective with general education students, they will be effective with ELs	n=38 (45%)	n=46 (55%)
When teaching content to ELs, teachers should be encouraged to draw on the previous experiences of the EL students	n=83 (98%)	n=2 (2%)
Teachers with ELs in their classrooms should be trained in culturally responsive education practices	n=84 (99%)	n=1 (1%)
School personnel know how to work with an interpreter	n=41 (48%)	n=44 (52%)
Teachers with ELs in their classroom know how to communicate with the parents of EL students	n=27 (32%)	n=58 (68%)
School leaders should work to build partnerships with EL families	n=84 (99%)	n=1 (1%)

Table 4: Principal Beliefs

Professional Development

Research has supported the need to invest in principal PD, continuous training and development coupled with time to reflect on and refine practice (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Louis et al., 2010; Rowland, 2017). Unfortunately, most of our nation's principals do not have access to PD that reflects what is happening today (Mendels, 2012; Rowland, 2017). Results from this study support that finding.

When asked if principals have an avenue, provided and supported through their district in which they can learn policy and practices specific to the education of ELs, 67% of respondents reported "No". The interview comments below reflect responses to the types of PD offered by the district, for both teachers and principals, and who they believe is responsible for providing that:

"The answer is, no criteria, no requirement." [In response to PD offered by the district.] (#9, urban, secondary)

"Well if it's going to be a coordinated effort, it should come from the district office, if the achievement of ELs is a priority." (#4, suburban, elementary)

"I think there is a need at the college level to provide courses that will prepare every single teacher to work with the EL population." (#12, urban, secondary)

"Teachers should know that [PD is] mandatory for them for license renewal, every 5 years they've got to do something." (#1, rural, secondary)

Principals also did report access to professional development through outside sources. Those completing the survey were asked to report the number of hours of PD in which they had participated that were specific to EL education within the past five years. Five or more hours of PD specific to teaching ELs was reported by 40% of principals,

55% reported 1–4 hours, and 5% reported none. They were then asked to identify themes guiding the PD sessions they attended. The most common themes involved culturally responsive educational practices (88%) and family and community strategies (72%).

Interview questions asked principals to identify the avenues through which principals learn about EL policies and practices, and who they believe should be responsible for providing that PD. Over half of the interviewees, (53%) believe the districts should be responsible for providing principal PD, while 29% of responses named principals as being responsible for their own PD. Finally, a number of principals reported attending PD specific to EL education sponsored by principal professional organizations and the Minnesota Department of Education.

The survey responses indicate that most principals did not receive PD in the areas of language acquisition or in the needs of EL students who qualify for special education services. The majority of those surveyed did not receive PD involving the Minnesota Bilingual and Multilingual Seals, World Language Proficiency Certificates, or Minnesota's Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success (LEAPS) Act.

In sum, professional development addressing cultural awareness and family and community engagement has been provided by the districts and is deemed important by principals. In contrast, professional development to address teaching practices designed to meet the academic and linguistic needs of EL students is reported to have occurred substantially less often at the district- and school-levels. This finding supports earlier findings in the principal beliefs section, noting the availability and priority for culturally responsive leadership practices as being the main form of PD related to EL education. Survey questions and responses addressing principals' professional development can be

found in Table 5 below.

Question	Response	
In the past five years, how many hours of professional development have you received in total that is specific to the education of ELs?		
None	n=4 (5%)	
1-2 Hours	n=25 (30%)	
3-4 Hours	n=21 (25%)	
5-6 Hours	n= 11 (13%)	
More Than 6 Hours	n=22 (27%)	
Have you received professional development in these specific areas?	Yes	No
Second language acquisition	n=25 (30%)	n=58 (70%)
Culturally responsive educational practices	n=73 (88%)	n=10 (12%)
Family and community involvement strategies	n=60 (72%)	n=23 (28%)
Research-based instructional strategies for ELs	n=40 (48%)	n=43 (52%)
Assessment practices for ELs	n=38 (46%)	n=45 (54%)
Child find procedures for ELs (process to identify students with special needs)	n=15 (18%)	n=68 (82%)
Students identified as EL and qualify for Special Education services	n=23 (28%)	n=60 (72%)
Students identified as EL and qualify for Gifted and Talented services	n= 9 (11%)	n=74 (89%)
Evaluation of general education teachers with ELs in their classroom	n=24 (29%)	n=59 (71%)
The World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) English Language Development Standards	n=36 (43%)	n=47 (57%)
Every Child Succeeds Act (ESSA), EL component	n=41 (49%)	n=42 (51%)
Entrance and exit criteria	n=42 (51%)	n=41 (49%)

Minnesota Bilingual and Multilingual Seals and World Language Proficiency Certificates	n=13 (16%)	n=69 (84%)
The Minnesota Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success (LEAPS)	n=7 (8%)	n=76 (92%)
Child find procedures for ELs (process to identify students with special needs)	n=15 (18%)	n=68 (82%)
Students identified as EL and qualify for Special Education services	n=23 (28%)	n=60 (72%)
Students identified as EL and qualify for Gifted and Talented services	n= 9 (11%)	n=74 (89%)
Evaluation of general education teachers with ELs in their classroom	n=24 (29%)	n=59 (71%)
The World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) English Language Development Standards	n=36 (43%)	n=47 (57%)
Every Child Succeeds Act (ESSA), EL component	n=41 (49%)	n=42 (51%)
Entrance and exit criteria	n=42 (51%)	n=41 (49%)
Minnesota Bilingual and Multilingual Seals and World Language Proficiency Certificates	n=13 (16%)	n=69 (84%)
The Minnesota Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success (LEAPS)	n=7 (8%)	n=76 (92%)

Table 5: Professional Development Specific to English Learner Education

Program Models and Services.

This element was addressed through survey and interview questions. The survey asked principals to report the program models and services offered at their schools.

Survey respondents selected possible program models from a list of choices; selecting multiple choices was appropriate (see Appendix A for descriptions of programs provided in the survey). Results from the survey are consistent with the reported prevalence of ESL program models throughout Minnesota (M. Bowlus, Multilingual Learner Education-MDE, personal communication, June 11, 2019). The ESL pull-out model was the most common model reported in both elementary and secondary schools according to survey results. Collaborative or co-teaching was reported as the second most common

model of instruction. Survey results were disaggregated by elementary and secondary levels to uncover potential differences reported by principals.

Elementary. There were 48 total survey responses among elementary principals. The ESL pull-out model—in which small groups of EL students are provided individualized instruction outside of the mainstream classroom by a licensed ESL teacher—was the most common model, at 54% (n=26) of responses. The second most common choice, with 25% (n=12) of responses, was the collaborative or co-teaching model, in which the ESL teacher instructs side-by-side with the grade level classroom teacher, and joint planning time is provided. Sheltered Instruction was selected by 17% (n=8) of respondents. Sheltered Instruction teachers use English as the medium for providing content area instruction, adapting their language to the proficiency level of the students. Instruction focuses on language through content rather than language in isolation and is provided by a trained classroom or ESL teacher. At the elementary level, one respondent chose dual immersion, and one chose heritage language programs; both options incorporate a student’s native language in instruction. The following are principal interview responses related to elementary school programs offered:

“We try to push in whenever possible. That was feedback we got from our parents.”

(#5, rural, elementary)

“Our EL teachers have connected with classroom teachers because sometimes they’re going into the classroom during literacy times.” “. . . we have no dedicated time for that.” [EL and classroom teachers to plan together] (#3, suburban, elementary)

“So, we have kind of a combination of pushing in and pulling out for our kids, really taking a look at what are the particular needs of each student at each grade level.” (#6,

urban, elementary) “We pull out our EL students because we don’t have that many, we just always have.” (#8, rural, elementary)

“We have a pull-out model, but there is an expectation, when we have two late starts a month and the teachers are all in the building, so they plan. The tricky part is that she [the ESL teacher] works in two buildings so she alternates months. . .” (#5, rural, elementary).

Based on these responses from elementary principals, ESL is by far the most common program type offered, as all principals reported ESL pull-out or push-in as either their program model or a component of their instructional service delivery. In analyzing responses with regard to the programs reflecting current research in EL instruction, principals may not have a broad knowledge of program models and choose ESL as the default model. Additionally, many principals reported co-teaching/team-teaching instructional models for EL students. However, the essential component of co-planning seems to be absent or insufficient based on principal descriptions. When co-planning is not an integral and consistent part of the model, ESL teachers often end up serving as glorified paraprofessionals.

Secondary. The majority of secondary principals, 39% (n=43) reported ESL programming as a model at their school, 21% (n=23) chose sheltered instruction, 28% (n=31) reported collaborative or co-teaching models, and 12% (n=13) reported a newcomer program. Newcomer programs are typically designed for new immigrants arriving at a US school at the middle or high school level. In newcomer programs, students are grouped together as EL learners for the majority of the day, with mainstream classes added as linguistically appropriate.

The interview data was in alignment with the survey results in that all secondary principals reported ESL as a component of their building services offered to EL students, and all but one of the secondary principals reported more than one model. Co-teaching and sheltered instruction were each reported by three of the six secondary interviewees, and one school reported a newcomer program for recent arrivals.

When probed for more information regarding program descriptions, the answers from interviewees were limited. Sheltered instruction teachers were not necessarily trained in delivering sheltered instruction for ELs and there was not consistent co-planning provided for the co-teaching teams. Several principals reported that, although there was no designated time for co-planning, there was “time in the work week” and teams were expected to find time for co-planning within the contract day.

The following are responses from secondary principals related to programs offered:

“... our students have driven what we offer. Before we would just pull-out and now, we have a tier of offerings.” (#1, rural, secondary)

“The EL teacher, the one part-time teacher we have in my district, works with us to see who building and says, ‘here’s what my evaluations indicated, here’s what I think the kid needs, and here’s how I propose to serve that kid.’ And really, she’s great.”

(#2, rural, secondary) should be evaluated to see if they’re in need of services. Then she talks to the principal at the building and says, ‘here’s what my evaluations indicated, here’s what I think the kid needs, and here’s how I propose to serve that kid.’ And really, she’s great. (#2, rural secondary)

Table 6 below illustrates the survey questions and responses regarding EL service models.

Question	Response
Which program types are available at your elementary school?	
English as a Second Language (ESL)	n=26 (54%)
Sheltered Instruction	n=8 (17%)
Collaborative or Co-teaching	n=12 (25%)
Two-Way Immersion/Dual Immersion	n=1 (2%)
Early Exit Bilingual Program	n=0 (0%)
Late Exit Bilingual Program	n=0 (0%)
Heritage Language Programs	n=1 (2%)

Which program types are available at your secondary school?	
English as a Second Language (ESL)	n=43 (39%)
Sheltered Instruction	n=23 (21%)
Collaborative or Co-teaching	n=31 (28%)
Continuation of Two-Way Immersion/Dual Immersion	n=0 (0%)
Newcomer Program	n=13 (12%)
Heritage Language Programs	n= 0 (0%)

Table 6: Program Models

Program model decision making. One of the interview questions asked who was included in programmatic decisions regarding EL services for individual students. All of the principals interviewed reported the ESL teacher or department and the classroom/content teachers as being involved in determining service delivery models for

EL students. ACCESS scores and the school schedule were also factors impacting service delivery. Additionally, five of the six secondary principals identified counselors as being involved in decision-making as well.

Strengths and Challenges. Principals were asked about their schools' EL program strengths through an open-ended question in the survey. Of the 40 responses provided, the majority fell into three general categories: EL teacher strength, strength and dedication of general education teachers, and EL program and services. The quality of EL teachers received the most responses, with 18 principals claiming it to be a strength. In terms of EL teacher qualities, the overall themes mentioned were: EL teacher experience and skill, the ability to collaborate and co-teach, advocate work on behalf of the EL program, and the ability to build connections with parents. Comments from the survey included:

“Our EL teacher is connecting and talking with our staff regularly about how our EL students are doing”

“Our EL teacher collaborates closely with classroom teachers and designs interventions for EL students....”

“Super awesome EL staff who advocate for our EL population.” “Amazing EL teacher who teams well with staff.”

All twelve principals interviewed also noted the skills and commitment of the general education teachers as a strength. Themes from their comments addressed teachers' ability to work as a team, collaboration skills, and the ability to deliver quality instruction to their EL students. A sample of comments included:

“The staff expertise is what makes our program strong.”

“ . . . the willingness of all teachers to do what is best for our EL students.”

“A school full of teachers who are committed to high quality instruction for ALL students.”

The last major area of strength reported by principals was their building program itself, including the services offered. While several principals described this as a strength, they did not provide details as to the specific program type. Collaborative practices and co-teaching between EL and general education teachers was the most frequently reported models that principals identified as a strength. Sheltered instruction, newcomer programs, and push-in models were also identified as strengths, although to a lesser degree.

Challenges related to the education of ELs were reported through specific survey questions and an additional open-ended question. Respondents were first asked a multiple-choice item in which they were to select one of four responses: “not a challenge at all”, “slight” challenge, “moderate” challenge, or “significant” challenge. Areas reported by principals as either a moderate or significant challenge were: engaging parents of EL students (66% of responses), finding time for teachers to collaborate (62%), lack of resources (62%), evaluating non-EL teachers with EL students in their classroom (62%), and general education teacher awareness of EL proficiency levels and supports needed (58%). Responses to the open-ended question illuminated two additional areas of challenge: parent and family concerns, and lack of resources specific to staffing. Sample comments of issues and concerns from the survey included:

“Sometimes parents of EL students don’t understand the reason for service is academic English.”

“So much information is provided via the website and so many families are not

connected and/or they can't read or understand the info.”

“Lack of instructional staff due to low numbers of EL students in specific schools.”

“Having extra personnel to work with students who function at elementary skills level.”

Cross-Tab Analysis of Survey Data

A number of survey responses were cross-analyzed to determine relationships among items on the survey. The questions addressed in the cross-tab analysis are as follows:

1. Do the hours of PD attended by principals differ according to the percent of EL students enrolled?
2. Do the hours of PD attended by principals differ by elementary or secondary levels?
3. Do principal beliefs associated with asset-based programs (i.e., those incorporating native language instruction) impact what program models are offered at their school?
4. Does reported PD of principals increase knowledge of policy and practice?
5. Are years of experience related to knowledge of policy and practice?

1) Do the hours of PD attended by principals differ according to the percent of EL students enrolled?

The hours of training did not differ significantly ($\chi^2 = 0.09$, $df = 1$, $p = .78$) between principals with greater than 20% of EL students enrolled and those with 0–20%.

% of EL students	Hours of Training	
	0-4	5 or more
0 – 20	36 (86%)	29 (91%)
>20	6 (14%)	3 (9%)

Table 7: Principal Hours of Professional Development and Percentage of EL Students Enrolled

2) Do the hours of PD attended by principals differ by elementary or secondary levels?

The hours of training did not differ significantly ($\chi^2 = 1.20$, $df = 1$, $p = .27$) between elementary and secondary principals.

School Level	Hours of PD	
	0-4	5 or more
Elementary	14 (32%)	15 (47%)
Secondary	30 (68%)	17 (53%)

Table 8: Hours of Professional Development by Elementary or Secondary

3) Do principal beliefs associated with asset-based programs (i.e., those incorporating native language instruction) impact what program models are offered at their school?

The majority of principals reported having ESL programs at their schools. While 98% of survey respondents believed that the acquisition of English is aided by native language development, only two of the 83 respondents reported having a program incorporating native language. Results of this analysis suggest that principal beliefs regarding asset-based programming do not impact program models offered at their school.

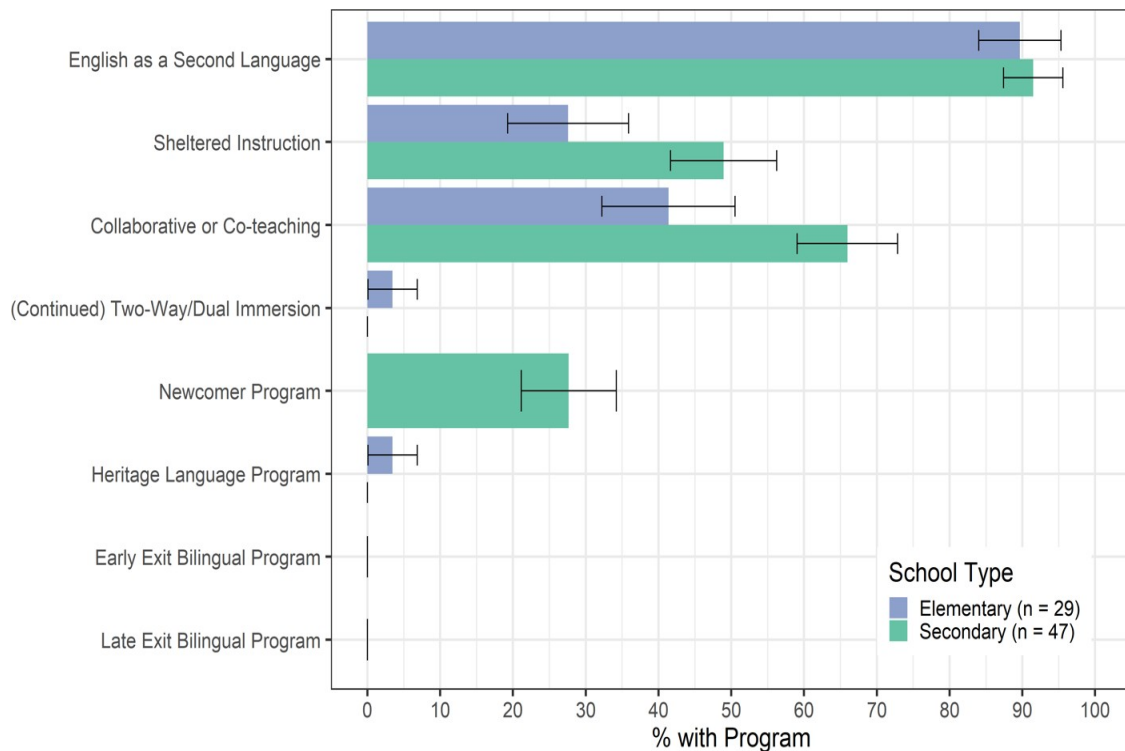


Figure 3. Percent of Elementary and Secondary Principals and Program Type Offered.

4. *Does reported professional development increase knowledge of policy and practice?*

Regardless of the number of hours of training, fewer than 40% of principals reported being “very” or “extremely” familiar, as opposed to “not at all” or “slightly” familiar, with 12 of the 14 policies and practices. While most differences between the two groups of principals were small, principals with five or more hours of training had a higher percentage of familiarity for 13 of the 14 policies and practices. Among principals with five or more hours of training, 58% and 52%, respectively, reported being “very” or “extremely” familiar with the WIDA EL standards and the interpretation of ACCESS scores for ELs. In comparison, regarding both WIDA EL standards and interpreting ACCESS scores for ELs, only 26% of principals with 0–4 hours of training reported being “very” or “extremely” familiar. Although the differences on WIDA EL standards

($\chi^2 = 6.67$, $df = 1$, $p = .01$) and on interpreting ACCESS scores for ELs ($\chi^2 = 4.20$, $df = 1$, $p = .04$) were the largest, the differences were still non-significant.

Another notable finding, albeit not statistically significant, were the differences between principal familiarity and hours of training. There were two areas of differences that were somewhat larger than others: EL standards regarding equitable access to services and materials, and translation and interpretation guidelines. Although these differences are not statistically significant, they may be a meaningful data point for decision makers.

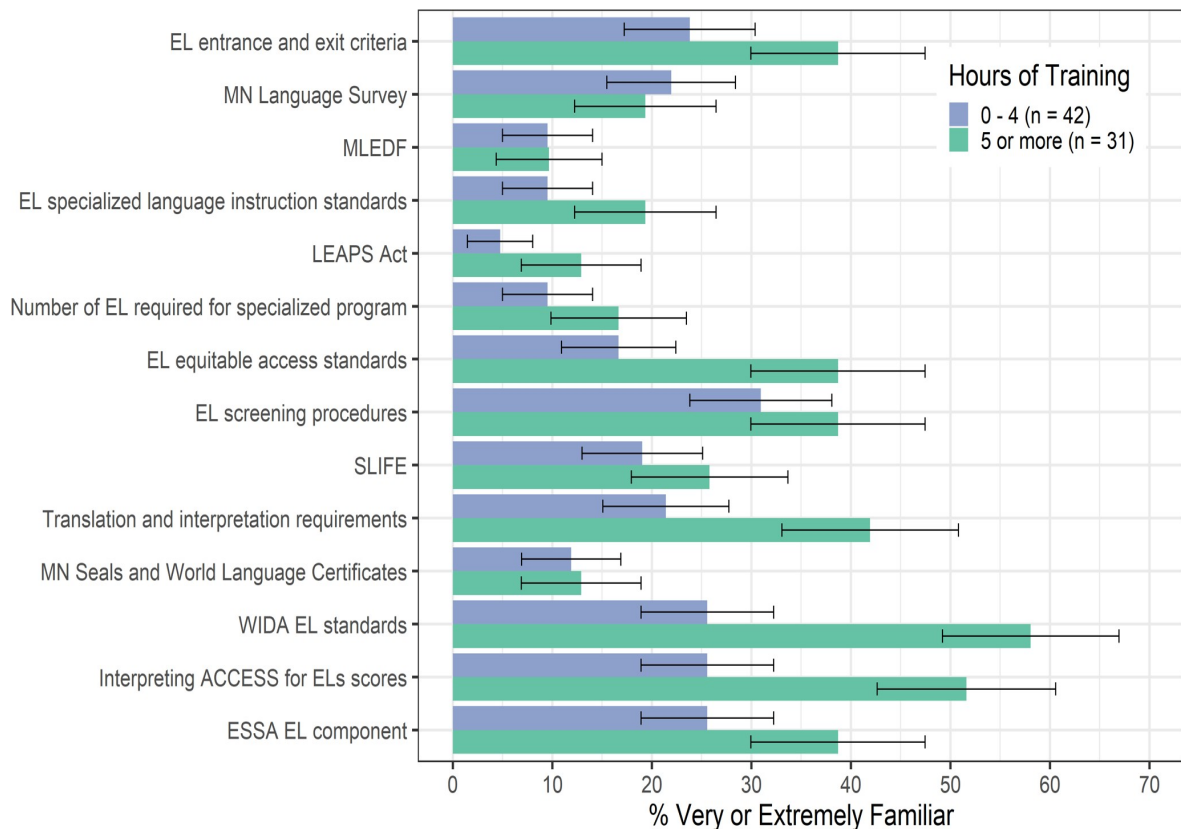


Figure 4. Percentage of Principals Who Were “Very” or “Extremely” Familiar (versus “not at all” or “slightly” familiar) With policies and Practices Concerning EL Students, by Hours of Professional Development.

5. *Are years of experience related to knowledge of policy and practice?*

For 13 of the 14 policies and practices, a higher percentage of principals with 0–5 years of experience reported being “very” or “extremely” familiar with those policies and practices. Conversely, the majority of principals with more than five years of experience reported a lack of familiarity with policies and practices; however, the differences tended to be small. Additionally, given the small number of principals with 0–5 years of experience ($n = 15$), even the largest difference of 21 percentage points for translation and interpretation requirements (0–5 years = 47%; >5 years = 26%) was statistically non-significant ($\chi^2 = 1.46$, $df = 1$, $p = .23$)

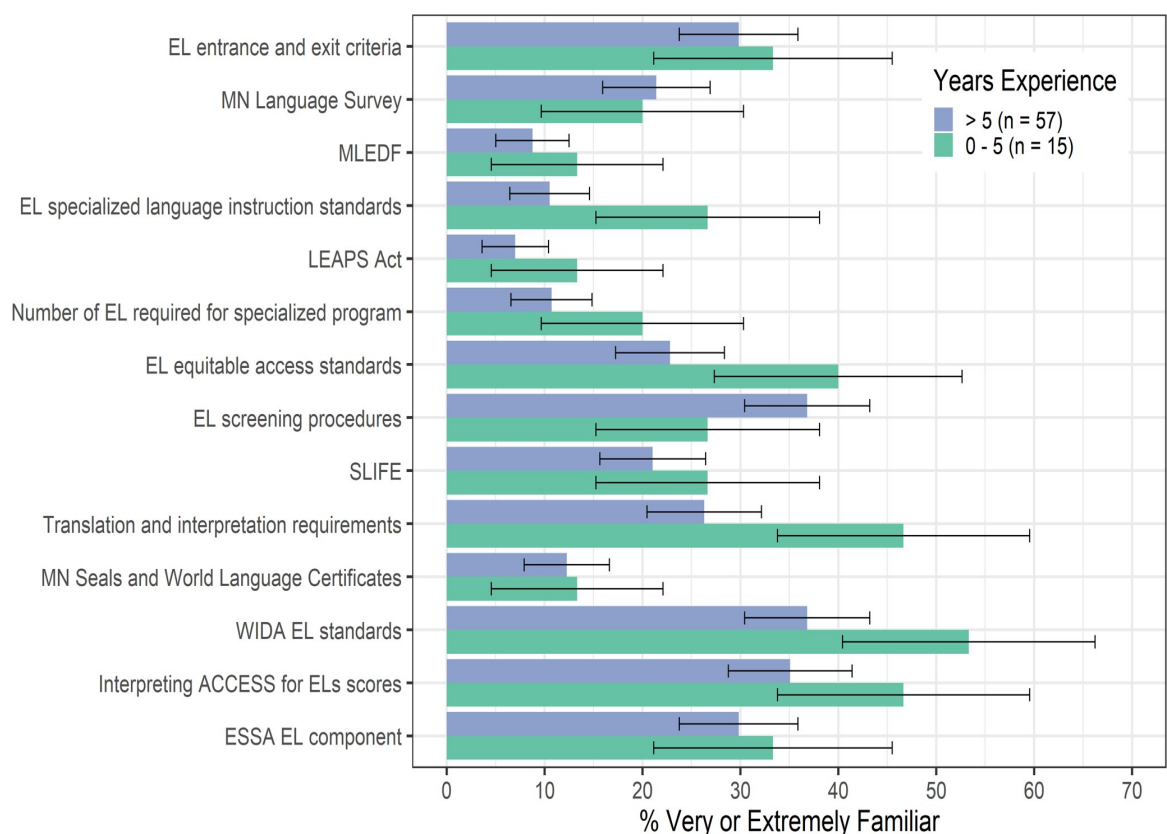


Figure 5. Percentage of Principals Who Were “Very” or “Extremely” Familiar (versus “not at all” or “slightly” familiar) With Policies and Practices Concerning EL Students by Years of Experience.

Cumulative Summary of Findings

Survey and interview data were compared using the four elements shown in Figure 2 as a guide to analysis. The comparison sought to determine patterns in responses that either support or contradict each other.

In the area of principal knowledge reported by principals, both data sets demonstrate limited knowledge of EL policy, practices, and guidelines at the state and national levels. The data also reveal that the majority of principals do not feel that EL policies shape their understanding of EL education. Most respondents knew of WBWF and ESSA but were not familiar with components specific to EL education.

The strongest response in the beliefs section was that principals report that the teaching of EL students is the responsibility of all staff and not limited to ESL or bilingual teachers. Both the quantitative data and the qualitative data demonstrate the need for differentiation of services based on student needs; as one principal noted, “services are not one size fits all.”

As reported in the survey and interview data, the most common program model in elementary and secondary schools was ESL pull-out, followed by collaborative and co-teaching models. The data suggest that secondary schools implement this model slightly more often than elementary schools. There were only two responses from principals who report having dual language or heritage language instruction in their schools, and no principals reported having a bilingual program. Nearly all principals had more than one type of program model in their school. Those with only one model were generally schools with small numbers of EL students. A final point in this section is that both survey and interview data show that all principals believe that co-planning and co-

teaching between the EL teacher and classroom or content area teacher has a positive impact on EL achievement.

For the majority of participants, PD opportunities specific to EL education were not offered to principals or teachers by the school district. Principals reported receiving PD from their professional organizations, through conferences, or on their own. At the school level, the majority of responses from principals indicated that the EL teachers provided professional development for building staff. The principal's role in interpretation of state and federal guidelines regarding services for EL education, making sense of policies and practices designed for ELs, and the implementation of those guidelines at the school level are all essential components of EL student academic success. These are merely a sample of what principals are expected to know in making decisions, highlighting the complex nature of the job of principal.

The historical and social contexts for language policy and planning interact with what principals know about the education of EL students. It is this point of intersection where principals develop their perceptions and thinking about what makes sense in their school context for the delivery of services for ELs. In order to achieve the goal of closing the achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs, principals, as building decision-makers and street-level bureaucrats, need to be knowledgeable of policies and practices involved in program development and service delivery models to ensure a quality education for English Learners.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Implications

Overview

Introduction

To better understand how written language policy and best practice research transforms into services and programs, it is essential to understand the role of the principal as building leader and ultimate decision maker. Toward that end, this study focused on principal sensemaking regarding EL education in Minnesota schools. The purpose of the study was to explore the knowledge, beliefs, and actions of the school principal in the implementation of EL language policy and practice in Minnesota schools. The following research questions were used to guide the study:

- 1) What do Minnesota principals report to know about EL language policy and practice?
- 2) What professional development opportunities specific to the education of English Learners do Minnesota Principals report to have engaged in within the past five years?
- 3) How are federal, state, and district EL language policies reportedly implemented by principals at the school level?

Principals participating in this study were from elementary and secondary schools with rural, suburban, and urban schools represented. Surveys and interviews were used to determine their knowledge of and experience within a range of elements associated with the education of EL students in their schools. The four elements reflect principal sensemaking regarding EL education and are: principal knowledge of state and federal

guidelines, principal beliefs, program models and services, and professional development.

Summary of the Problem for this Study

The problem addressed in this study is the growing concern among US educators that too few EL students are reaching proficiency on grade level achievement tests at a level commensurate with their peers, both locally and nationally. Minnesota enrolled 73,128 students with English Learner status in the 2018-19 school year, an increase of 1.7 percent from the previous year (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018a). The Minnesota Department of Education highlighted the need for improvement in the state ESSA plan stating, “Federal and state policy and practice must recognize the needs and diversity of ELs in an effort to close the ongoing achievement gap” (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018a).

Scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (U.S. Department of Education, 2015), also known as the Nation’s Report Card, showed a similar gap in both reading and math between EL and non-EL students. In addressing the achievement gap between ELs and non-ELs, this study focused on the principal as building leader.

This goal of this study was to address the role of school principal in the provision of educational services of ELs through analysis/examination of their understanding and implementation of language policies and practices. In addition, the study sought to understand the professional development opportunities in which principals have participated to increase their knowledge of EL education.

In examining the role of principal in EL education, the literature review focused on three bodies of research: a) language policy and planning within social and historical

contexts, b) principal understanding of policy and practices for ELs, and c) sensemaking, which involves how principals make sense of information in guiding them toward policy implementation. The question of opening implementational spaces, by creating asset-based services promoting multilingualism for EL students, was also explored. A brief summary of each of these areas follows.

Language Policy and Planning

The areas of commonality in the history of language policy among researchers, although distinct in verbiage, include the debate regarding language as either a problem or an asset, language as a civil right, and the value of the current ethnographic study of language (Hornberger, 2015;. Johnson & Ricento, 2013; Menken & García, 2017; Ovando, 2003). The way in which language is viewed by the principal, as an asset or a deficit, could have a significant impact on program choices and design, thus, student learning.

Principal Understanding

Research in school improvement has demonstrated that school leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Much research in language policy and programming related to EL students has focused on the causes of and potential solutions to the widening achievement gap through an equity and social justice lens (Johnson, 2009; May, 2011, 2017). Ascenzi-Moreno, Hesson, and Menken (2016) found that principals are often responsible for the interpretation and appropriation of language policy and service delivery at their sites, yet the area of principal leadership and language policy has received little attention as the gap between

ELs and non-ELs continues to widen.

Studies in the area of school leadership and EL practices and policy are limited, and most conclude that school principals and other educational leaders possess an inadequate knowledge of EL programs and practices, even those programs they supervise (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Padron & Waxman, 2016; Scanlan & López, 2012). They are then making essential programmatic decisions sans the body of knowledge needed to make such decisions.

Principal Sensemaking.

Sensemaking involves “. . . the interplay of action and interpretation rather than the influence of evaluation on choice” (Weick et al., 2005, p. 409). In the context of school principals and EL education, decisions (actions) are made based on the intersection of principal’s existing world view (beliefs) and knowledge regarding the education of ELs. If a principal has limited experience with the policy and practices in the education of ELs, and/or a limited view of the education of ELs, they will be making decisions with insufficient information.

Expectations of Principals

The overwhelming nature of the job of principal is a backdrop to the conclusions noted in this study. The education of ELs is but one of the many facets of education in which principals are expected to apply their knowledge to make decisions in their buildings. This study was designed to explore principal sensemaking regarding English Learner education including factors involved in determining and delivering services. Relative to EL education, the study explored how EL policies and guidelines may influence decisions regarding services for EL students in Minnesota schools. An

additional focus on asset-based programs, those promoting multilingualism for ELs, was explored in relation to the 2014 LEAPS Act in Minnesota.

The Role of Principal

The wide array of challenges that the principal must address was threaded throughout these results. In this study, principals commented on the nature of the job of principal with an answer akin to the “lack of time to get it all done.” A large body of research describes the vast and, at times, stressful nature of the principal’s job (Beausaert, Froehlich, Devos, & Riley, 2016; Friedman, 2002; Muse & Abrams, 2011). These researchers characterize the role of school principal as one with overwhelming responsibilities, information perplexities, and emotional anxiety. Additionally, the role is described as having innumerable factors guiding decision making, many of which are unclear and, at times, contradictory (Rowland, 2017; Wallace Foundation, 2016).

In addition to principal beliefs and knowledge of EL policy and practice, this study has identified two additional elements that may influence sensemaking of principals in decision making regarding EL education: professional development, and program models and services. Hence, four, bi-directional elements reflecting principal sensemaking were incorporated to address the research questions in this study: knowledge of state and federal guidelines, principal beliefs, professional development, and program models and services. (See Figure 2 below)

Elements of Principal Sensemaking Regarding English Learner Education

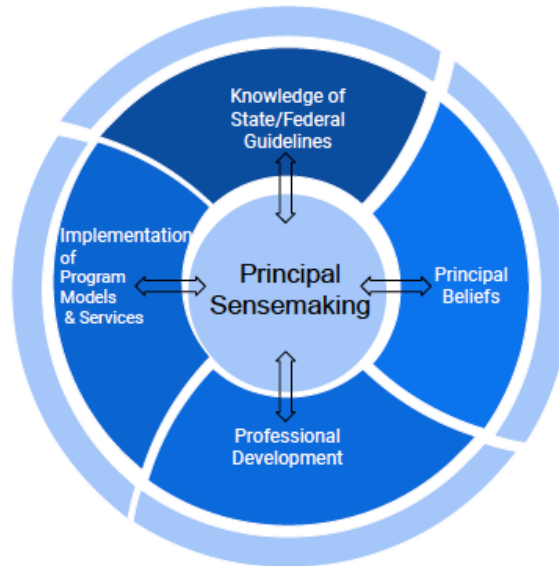


Figure 2: Elements Reflecting Principal Sensemaking Regarding English Learner Education

Discussion and Implications

Language policy interpretation, implementation, and appropriation is typically realized at the school level (Johnson & Ricento, 2013; Johnson & Johnson, 2015; Menken, 2013). The principal's role is paramount in policy implementation, as they are the ultimate decision maker for their school. Coburn (2005) concluded that principals use sensemaking in the process of policy implementation, in addition, he found that principals influence teachers' sensemaking about instructional policy both directly and indirectly through how the message is shaped. In sum, policy implementation depends on the professional discretion and leadership of principals (O'Laughlin & Lindle, 2015).

This study was designed as a mixed-methods study in an effort to gather rich and

comprehensive data that would thoroughly address the research questions. A mixed-methods approach can incorporate a broad view by using a survey in the quantitative approach and a have a view of greater depth as provided by quantitative methods by including the addition of the voice of the principal through interviews. Additionally, using both methods offset the weaknesses inherent in each method while strengthening the findings. This study was designed as a Quan + qual study, indicating that the quantitative methods are the dominant design and the qualitative methods are secondary (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010), in mixed methods studies where quantitative and qualitative methods are both utilized, results are integrated to form meta-inferences representing both data sets. A meta-inference is defined as “. . . a conclusion generated through an integration of the inferences that have been obtained from the results of the QUAL and QUAN strands of an MM [mixed methods] study” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). This chapter will focus on the four meta-inferences unveiled by this study, as it also addresses the study’s guiding research questions. The four meta-inferences to be discussed are:

- 1) Principals Are Not Knowledgeable of EL Policies and Practices
- 2) Strategies Focused on Race and Equity are not Enough for ELs
- 3) Principals Demonstrate Inconsistencies Between Beliefs and Practices
- 4) A Systematic Approach to Professional Development is Needed

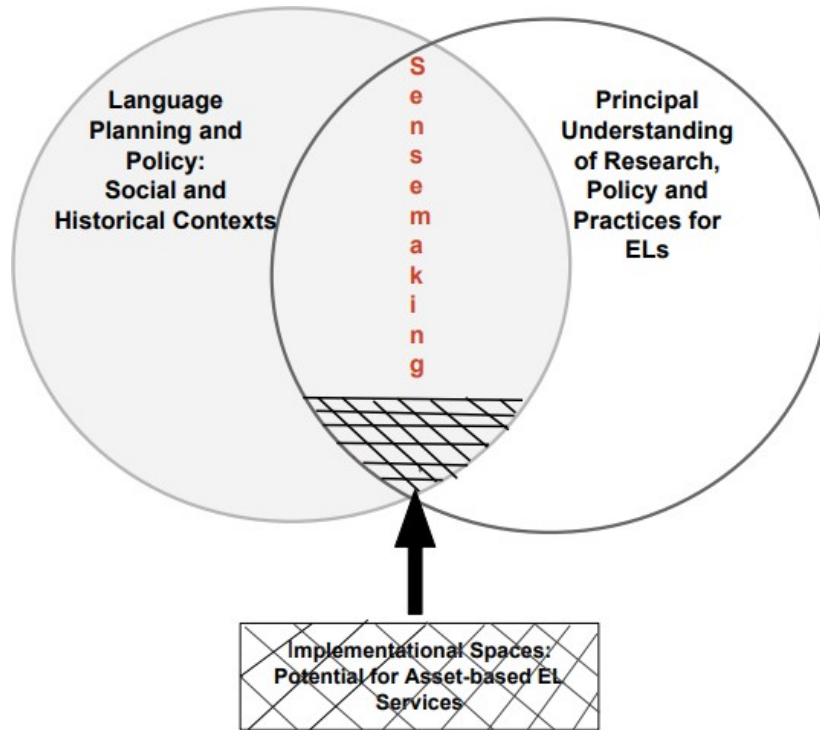
Meta-Inference One: Principals Are Not Knowledgeable of EL Policies and Practices

Minnesota principals are generally not familiar with state and federal guidelines addressing EL education, even as the guidelines in which the information needed to design quality programs for EL students are already delineated in documents such as LEAPS. Given the lack of knowledge about EL policies and practices, the design and type of programs available for ELs is also limited as a result.

Program knowledge. Principals in this study were asked to report their knowledge of language policy and practice specific to EL education. The number of principals in this study who self-reported unfamiliarity with state and federal guidelines for EL students is remarkably high with 60% of principals reporting they were “not very” or “slightly” familiar with all MDE English Learner guidelines. National level guidelines, found in the Every Child Succeeds Act (ESSA), Worlds Best Workforce (WBWF), and the World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) consortium, revealed only slightly more familiarity among survey respondents.

In addition, the majority of principals in this study reported that state and federal policies and practices do not shape their understanding or implementation of EL services offered. This study concurs with results from Padrón and Waxman 2018) in their study conducted in a Texas school district. They found district principals had limited knowledge of second language programming and policies, and guidelines created to support policies and practices were not a large contributing factor when developing programs at their schools. They conclude that lack of knowledge could have a negative impact on EL student success.

Without the benefit of research-based guides and examples denoting best practices for EL students, principals are left to make sense of EL programmatic needs through what they know about the social and historical contexts of language acquisition,



intersected with what they understand and believe regarding EL research, policies, and practices regarding services for EL students (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1. Literature Review Components

In this study, that intersection between what principals know about language planning and policy including social and historical contexts and what principals understand about research, policies and practices regarding EL education is referred to as sensemaking. Results from this study indicate that principal sensemaking in relation to EL education is happening in a relative knowledge vacuum, absent the benefit of policies

and practices to guide those decisions.

A consequence of principals' limited knowledge of EL policy and practice emerging from this study reveals that principals defer to their ESL teachers in assuring that the school is doing the right thing for EL students. In fact, when asked about program strengths, the majority of principals reported ESL teachers to be the strength of the program. This finding is consistent with the leadership study conducted by Ascenzi-Moreno, et al., (2016) in which they made the following statement, "Many school principals leave the instructional fate of emergent bilingual students in the hands of 'unofficial' teacher leaders, most commonly bilingual and ESL teachers" (Ascenzi-Moreno et al., 2016, p. 198).

While this practice appears to demonstrate confidence in ESL teachers, it may also be shifting the responsibilities of designing and implementing EL programming to teachers alone. Research has found the practice of shifting responsibilities, either consciously or unconsciously, is not uncommon when the principal has limited knowledge of programs and practices (Rong & Brown, 2002; Padron & Waxman, 2016; Hickman & García, 2014). In other words, when principals do not fully understand policies, practices, and programs for EL students, they tend to concede the responsibility of design and implementation to their ESL teachers.

Absence of thorough knowledge among school administrators regarding EL policies and services could be interpreted as a barrier to the development of programs that meet the academic and linguistic needs, thus proficiency, of EL students (Brooks, Adams, & Morita-Mullaney, 2010; Padron & Waxman, 2016). Administrators implementing EL programs without understanding the potential options may be reducing

potential options based on limited information.

Program implementation. There are two overall approaches to the teaching of ELs from which to choose, ESL and bilingual, although a number of unique programs under each approach exist. The largest factor in differentiating between ESL and bilingual programs is the amount, if any, of native language is used for instruction. ESL programs are, for the most part, English-only options striving for the goal of English proficiency without the option of native language instruction. Bilingual programs typically continue the development of the student's primary language along with English language instruction, ESL is a central component of bilingual programs. Content areas are taught in both languages in bilingual programs (Ovando, & Combs, 2018).

Principals were asked to report the implementation of federal, state, and district language policies at the school level. As previously stated, the number of principals unfamiliar with EL policies and practices was high, leading to limited program delivery options. Program options for EL students represented in this study were fairly narrow in focus, with ESL as a stand-alone model being the most common instructional model reported. These services were delivered as either pull-out, push-in, or a combination of both. Some services were reported as a component of their tiered intervention system of support. On the survey, principals reported a total of 158 program models as being in use, with only two respondents describing examples of asset-based, language-as-resource models of service delivery: one dual immersion program and one heritage language program. This finding was somewhat surprising because principals in this study also overwhelmingly reported that they believe native language proficiency assists in learning English.

This discrepancy could possibly be explained through the lens of the sensemaking literature (Evans, 2007). He found that principals make sense of changes through an array of sources, but some leaders did not have the experience or knowledge to modify their thinking. In contrast, Ascenzi-Moreno et al. (2016) found that shifting school leaders' understanding of bilingual, asset-based programming resulted in positive shifts in the ways in which ELs were educated under the direction of the school leader. In sum, when principals have a deep knowledge of the theory and research on second language acquisition, they are better able to analyze and improve services for EL students (Ascenzi-Moreno et al., 2016; de Jong, 2013; Hornberger, 2002; Menken, 2013; Scanlan & López, 2012; Tollefson & Tsui, 2014).

Consistent with the results of this study, Scanlan and López (2012) found the largest barrier to the implementation of best practices for EL students was leaders' lack of awareness of EL education. They concluded that leadership preparation programs and professional development for practitioners regarding ELs are not keeping pace with the demographic shift in numbers of ELs, resulting in school leaders underprepared to serve EL students (US Department of Education, 2010; Scanlan & López, 2012).

Regardless of the approach chosen, there continues to be passionate controversy in determining the best way to educate EL students and assure their integration into US society (Crawford, 2004; Ovando & Combs, 2018). There is substantial evidence that bilingual programs are successful in achieving English and content proficiency while allowing students to maintain their cultural and linguistic heritage. The ability to maintain cultural and linguistic identity provides an additional set of benefits for EL students that are not addressed when learning in an English-Only (EO) environment. For example,

most students in EO programs do not maintain or develop proficiency in their language and that lack of proficiency can result in weakening ties with family, culture, and community. In turn, bilingual programs promote native language proficiency strengthening those ties (Fillmore, 2000; García & Lin, 2017; Wright & Baker, 2017).

Additional benefits reported include enhanced cognitive effects most evident in attention and executive functioning (Antoniou, 2019; Barac & Bialystok, 2017; Weber, Johnson, Ricco, & Liew, 2016), stronger academic outcomes than in EO classrooms (Baker, Basaraba, & Polanco, 2016; Gándara & Escamilla, 2017; López & Tashakkori, 2004; Thomas & Collier, 2002), and some research has demonstrated bilingualism reduces the potential for Alzheimer’s disease (Antoniou, 2019; Bialystok, 2011; Quinteros Baumgart & Billick, 2018). These results support the asset-based orientation of bilingual programs. Unfortunately, much of this research appears to have been overlooked or is unknown in favor of the implementation of ESL programs.

Meta-Inference Two: Strategies Focused on Race and Equity are not Enough for ELs

Minnesota has been engaged in efforts to close the achievement gap between white students and students of color with mixed results (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018b; Rodriguez, Nickodem, Palma, & Stanke, 2016). Due to the continued gap in educational outcomes, closing the gap has been central to state-wide improvement efforts in education. Even though not all ELs are categorized as students of color, many EL students are also designated as students of color in reporting to the state and federal governments. This dual designation seems to cause confusion for those looking to

improve the academic success of ELs. As needs between students of color and EL students can overlap, there are also unique academic and social needs for EL students that are not addressed in most culturally responsive professional development opportunities. This is not an attempt to discount the value of these opportunities, but rather to shed light on the components that are missing in order to address the linguistic and cultural needs of ELs.

When principal professional development in this study was examined in terms of content, the most frequently reported topic was in the area of culturally responsive educational practices. This finding is consistent with previous research reporting that professional development was presented as addressing EL education, when, in fact, the focus of the PD was narrowed to issues of social justice and equity (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Padron & Waxman, 2016; Scanlan & López, 2012) and did not address instructional aspects of educating English Learners.

In the effort to address and close the achievement gap between white students and students of color, educators in Minnesota may be painting with a very broad brush and therefore attempting to simplify a wicked problem with an incomplete solution. A wicked problem is defined in multiple ways but is generally thought of as social or cultural problem that is difficult to solve due to interconnected nature of these problems with other problems (Head, 2019). This is the case with the education of EL students.

As stated earlier, professional development regarding culturally responsive teaching, equity, and social justice are valuable topics in regard to EL communities but, when presented alone, are not enough to meet the complex educational needs of EL students. The education of EL students includes culturally responsive education, along

with the construct of language acquisition and the impact on learning content in a second language. As a state, we have been addressing culturally responsive aspects of education, while as a whole, we have not addressed the academic and linguistic needs specific to English Learners. Perceiving EL students solely through an equity lens ignores the essential instructional practices and supports needed for ELs to become academically proficient (Menken & García, 2017; Padron & Waxman, 2016; Scanlan & López, 2012).

Meta-Inference Three: Principals Demonstrate Inconsistencies Between Beliefs and Practices

The data revealed a number of inconsistencies between what principals reported to believe and what is offered in their buildings. For example, 100% of principals who responded to the survey reported that it is everyone's responsibility to teach EL students, but only 82% believed that classroom/content teachers needed special training, and over half of principals surveyed did not provide professional development specific to EL learning for their teachers.

Another example of disagreement between what principals report to believe and what they offer in their buildings is with regard to program type. Although 100% of principal participants reported co-planning and co-teaching between ESL and classroom teachers to have a positive impact on EL achievement, in practice however, very few have co-teaching models and even fewer have designated time for ESL and classroom teachers to co-plan. Again, principal actions in this area did not match their stated beliefs.

A third example of inconsistency was in principal beliefs regarding the importance of native language. In the survey, 86% of participants reported that teaching

ELs to read in their native language promotes higher levels of reading in English, and 98% of respondents reported that the acquisition of English is aided by the development of native language literacy. However, when listing the types of programs in their schools, there was only one principal with a dual immersion program where native language is incorporated, and one principal reported a heritage language program. Consequently, fewer than 2% of responses from the survey included native language as part of the instructional choices at their schools. An additional inconsistency in the results showed that 42% of respondents believe that ELs learn best when immersed in an English-only environment, thus revealing a discrepancy in the two opposite viewpoints—use of native language in instruction and English-only instruction.

Reviewing these responses through the principal sensemaking framework in Figure 1 may help to make sense of this contradiction. In applying sensemaking theory, principal sensemaking in relation to EL education is primarily influenced by social and historical contexts of language planning and principal understanding of EL research, policy, and practice. Where those two bodies of information intersect is the principal's current world view and where sensemaking occurs.

In sensemaking theory, when information is limited and there is no frame of reference to create a connection, people will make sense of a new experience through what they already know and believe (Weick et al., 2005). In this case, principals demonstrated limited knowledge of policies and practices for ELs and, as such, had to rely on what they knew and what they believed. It may seem to make sense that the more English one is exposed to, the greater fluency in English one will demonstrate. Research, however, has shown that students develop stronger skills in English and content areas

when native language is incorporated as a part of the academic program (Collier & Thomas, 2017; Cummins, 1992). Thus, principals may be experiencing confusion and mixed messages when making sense of service delivery models and may then reach the conclusion, the belief, that both instructional orientations produce equal results.

Implications from the findings of this study highlight the lack of native language, asset-based, language-as-resource programs for Minnesota's English Learners. There are multiple reasons for the emphasis on English-only programs in place of bilingual programs, reasons that could potentially impact principal sensemaking regarding EL education. The most common reasons for the support of ESL over bilingual programs found in the literature are: anti-immigrant sentiment, pressures from high-stakes accountability testing, and general lack of knowledge regarding the goals of bilingual programs (Crawford, 2004; Hornberger, 2002; Menken, 2017; Menken & Solorza, 2014b; Scanlan & López, 2012; Tollefson & Tsui, 2014). I will address each of these reasons briefly, as they are potential factors influencing principal sensemaking.

The first potential deterrent to support of bilingual education programs is the presence and growth of anti-immigrant sentiment. This sentiment ebbs and flows in its strength, but never completely disappears, which has led to many ballot decisions restricting language use (Gándara & Orfield, 2012). A great deal of political rhetoric fills media outlets blaming immigrants for a wide range of societal problems (Cobb, Meca, Branscombe, Schwartz, Xie, Zea, Fernandez, Sanders, 2019; Edwards, 2018; Gemignani & Hernandez-Albujar, 2015; Rodriguez, 2017). The range of views expressed by government leaders and from other opinion leaders reveal a range of sociopolitical forces that can influence principal sensemaking in matters related to EL education.

These public views are important to take into account because sociopolitical forces embedded within the community influence principal sensemaking as principals interact with the community (DeMatthews, 2015; Evans, 2007; Spillane et al., 2002). Additionally, sensemaking is a sociocultural process “situated in the practice and common beliefs of the community” (Spillane et al., 2002, p. 58). Principals, as policy implementors, interact with a wide range of stakeholders, some holding decision-making power while others do not (Alexander, 2013). In the event of a conflict of beliefs, it is likely that the stakeholders with power will be heard over others and decisions would be made that favor the more powerful groups.

The second potential barrier to the use of native language was the introduction of No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002), which led to the abolishment of the long-standing Bilingual Education Act and, at the same time, increased the emphasis on high stakes testing in English. Menken (2013) maintains “. . . language proficiency impedes student performance on a test administered in English, which means such tests have become language proficiency exams for emergent bilinguals, even when they are intended to assess academic content knowledge” (p. 163). These high stakes English testing results have mistakenly led many to believe that instruction in native language prevents students from gaining proficiency in English, a conclusion which is counter to the research regarding bilingual education. To many however, it makes sense that more English instruction leads to improved English proficiency more quickly. Many educators can make sense from that model, even when the evidence refutes it (Barac & Bialystok, 2017; Crawford, 1993; Cummins, 2000; de Jong, 2002; Hornberger, 2009; Johnson & Freeman, 2010; Ovando & Combs, 2018; Ovando, 2003; Simon-Cereijido, 2018; Thomas &

Collier, 2002).

And finally, as noted in this study and others, most principals are not familiar with Language Policy and Practice (LPP) research or current and former policies supporting multilingualism for ELs. The term bilingual education itself stirs controversy throughout the education system, as well as in many social service agencies (Crawford, 1993; Ovando, 2003). According to Ruíz (1984, 2010), the majority of the problems associated with bilingual education in the US are due to hostility and divisiveness in the underlying language-as-right or language-as-problem orientation, not to the quality or success of the programs themselves.

Meta-Inference Four A Systematic Approach to Professional Development is Needed

There has been a lack of attention on principal professional development as districts have tended to focus resources on teacher professional development (Rowland, 2017). This finding is also supported by Louis et al. (2010) in which researchers found little evidence of comprehensive and on-going professional development systems for principals. This finding is additionally exacerbated by the conclusion that too few principals receive high-quality, targeted preservice training (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Wallace Foundation, 2016). Based on the findings of this current study, the lack of professional development focused on English Learner programs and practices is not limited to a few principals or districts but is likely a system-wide issue in Minnesota.

Principals in this study were asked to report professional development opportunities specific to the education of ELs in which they have participated within the

past five years. Nearly all principals reported participation in professional development related to having EL students in their schools, but as noted earlier, the largest reported topic was in the area of culturally responsive educational practices, not in the use of instructional strategies specific to EL students. This finding is consistent with previous research reporting that professional development was presented as addressing EL education, when, in fact, the focus of the PD was narrowed to issues of social justice and equity (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014; Padron & Waxman, 2016; Scanlan & López, 2012)

In terms of access to professional development specific to the education of English Learners, two thirds of principals completing the survey (n=70) reported that their district did not offer PD for principals related to the instruction for ELs. This result aligns with the finding from the interviews that eight of twelve (67%) principals reported that their districts did not provide PD specific to EL education. This is especially concerning, as the majority of principals also reported little familiarity with policies and guidelines supporting ELs.

Implications from the results of this study suggest the need for a comprehensive, systems- approach to providing principals with the information needed to make informed decisions with respect to the education of EL students. The majority of principals in this study reported that districts should be responsible for providing needed professional development focused on the education of ELs. As one interviewee stated, “If the education of EL students is a priority, it should come from the district.”

Results from this study also uncovered the need for professional development for classroom/content teachers. This finding aligns with previous research findings that classroom/content teachers have limited knowledge and confidence in teaching EL

students (Gandara & Hopkins, 2010; Darling-Hammond et al., 2010). When teachers are not confident in teaching EL students, an additional burden is placed on the principal as the instructional leader. Principals need to address classroom/content teachers who may not be effective in teaching EL students by providing guidance and support toward improvement. Professional development to support principals' knowledge of instructional strategies in the classroom would allow principals to then provide informed support to their classroom teachers.

Principal professional development opportunities should provide information specific to the teaching and learning of English Learners, including policies and practices designed to meet the needs of EL students. Examples of potential PD topics include language acquisition theory, EL program models, research-based instructional strategies for ELs, assessment practices for ELs, identifying EL students who qualify for gifted or special education services, and techniques to support content/classroom teachers in meeting the linguistic and academic needs of EL students.

Second, there is a lack of agreement as to who is responsible for providing PD for principals, as well as what PD is most valuable in supporting principals. One result from this study revealed that principals believe it is the responsibility of the district office to provide PD in EL education for principals, yet only a portion of districts offered this specific PD. Principals had to look outside their districts if they wanted to increase their knowledge of the education of ELs.

Several concerns regarding this method of professional development arise. Professional development delivered by entities outside of the district does not address a systems-level problem. Relying on PD provided outside the district is a piecemeal

solution that will only include those in search of more insight into EL education.

Additionally, without district input, there is little oversight regarding the topic of the PD. With the multitude of expectations for principals, coupled with the limited time available for PD, it is important to target specific topics most relevant to the needs of the principal as well as the needs of the individual school.

District guidance in leading professional development for principals would help assure a common message between and among principals and, consequently, teaching staff throughout the district. A district focus could also reduce the practice of shifting programmatic responsibilities from principals to teachers alone. With a district-wide professional development initiative, principals would have the requisite information needed to align policy with practice. Teachers would become an integral part of program development and support, and district level staff would be able to assist schools in the implementation of PD goals.

Third, there is a need to explore how building leaders can provide PD for classroom teachers in their building that is specific to the instruction of ELs without entirely shifting the responsibility solely to the ESL teachers. One possible solution would be to utilize the skills and knowledge of the ESL and bilingual teachers in the district to assist a district-level leader in the implementation of professional development for all classroom teachers in the district. The point person most connected to a PD plan of this magnitude would likely be a person in the position such as the Director of Teaching and Learning or an EL coordinator or director who could help in creating a PD plan for all teachers.

Implications for Future Research

Although this study attempted to include a representative sample of principals throughout the state, there were fewer responses within some groups that may have provided additional comparative data. For example, elementary principals comprised 38% of respondents, while secondary principals represented 62% of respondents, even though the total number of Minnesota elementary principals far exceeds that of secondary principals, 866 to 130 respectively. Thus, a study that included more elementary principals may shed additional light on the findings that reveal differences between elementary and secondary contexts.

The respondents also represented more experienced principals with nearly 80% reporting five or more years of experience. A portion of the data analyzed suggests that principals with fewer years of experience may have more knowledge of state and federal policies and guidelines, even though these results were not statistically significant partially due to the low numbers of less experienced principals participating in this study. Additional study of less experienced principals may reveal that principal preparation programs are, indeed, doing a better job of exploring the educational needs and services for ELs.

Finally, rural and suburban principals were represented in this study in higher numbers (42% and 38% respectively) than urban principals (20%). This demographic characteristic may have an impact on future findings because urban principals generally tend to enroll larger numbers of EL students. Examining the knowledge, practices and beliefs of a larger number of urban principals may reveal different outcomes.

Additional research could examine how and if EL education is included in

principal preparation programs and if that content includes what principals need in order to make informed decisions for EL students. Determining what is required in leadership preparation programs and whether requirements meet the needs of principals serving ELs will help pinpoint the gaps and contribute to information needed to improve principal knowledge at the university level.

Another area of research could examine principal professional development and principals' understanding of EL education. Professional development specific to EL education provided to principals is largely absent from Minnesota principal experience. This would include topics such as language acquisition, research-based instructional strategies for ELs, and the policies and guidelines in Minnesota and national levels. The question yet to be determined is whether professional development in EL education is the responsibility of the superintendent at the district level or through other avenues such as the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE).

A final area of investigation could examine how principals address the needs of classroom teachers in their buildings. Harvey & Teemant (2011) found the role of ESL teachers to be "multifaceted and complex" and continue with, "In this era of high stakes accountability, the roles, responsibilities, and preparation of ESL specialists and mainstream teachers for ELLs ought to be revisited" (p. 47). Defining the role of ESL and bilingual teachers would clarify expectations for both the principal and the teachers.

Summary

Educational sensemaking has been described as making meaning, "the cognitive act of taking in information, framing it and using it to determine actions and behaviors in a way that manages meaning for individuals" (Evans, 2007, p. 161). Sensemaking

theories have been used to examine the values and beliefs of principals, and how those variables influence leadership practice and action (Coburn, 2001, 2005; DeMatthews, 2015; Evans & Hornberger, 2005; Spillane et al., 2002). Leaders' sensemaking is situated in their professional biographies, building histories, and roles as intermediaries between the district office and classroom teachers (Evans, 2007; Spillane et al., 2002; Theoharis & O'Toole, 2011). Leaders' opinions and beliefs can change when a learning intervention takes place and how a principal makes sense of doing the right thing for ELs has the potential to change as well.

Principal sensemaking in regard to EL education in this study appears to occur with very little input outside of principal beliefs and can be contradictory in the manner in which decisions are processed. The majority of principals reported that they made EL programmatic determinations without the use of state or national policies to guide those decisions. In terms of additional factors influencing sensemaking in this study, there were no statistical differences in the data based on: a) years of experience of principal, b) hours of professional development attended, c) program models and services, or d) knowledge of state and federal guidelines. This data, when applied to the four elements reflecting principal sensemaking in this study, led to the conclusion that principal beliefs may impact their sensemaking to a larger degree than the other three elements of knowledge, professional development and implementation of policies/practices.

A concern reported by principals in this study was the inadequate priority placed on EL education. One principal commented that there are few consequences when policies and guidelines are not followed, unlike special education policies and guidelines which are monitored and sanctioned by state and federal entities. He followed up by

stating that it is due to the lack of consequences that it is easier to “skimp on the EL services.” EL populations have rarely held social or political capital in which to demand services and/or changes to current practice, which is very different from the power and support of advocates for special education.

Language use in public education has been controversial since the early eighteenth century (de Jong, 2013; Menken, 2013; Shin, 2016), and the past three decades have demonstrated an increased level of political conflict between policies supporting assimilationist views of language versus those supporting pluralist views. Regardless of the view adopted, policies have been weak and inconsistent, undermining the ability to measure success (Gándara & Rumberger, 2009) and leaving services to be developed in a relative knowledge vacuum (Gándara & Hopkins, 2010). Principals are operating within this knowledge vacuum, attempting to make sense of available information, and when combined with their present beliefs, to provide services for English Learners. This makes the role of principal more difficult, but also very important.

Research has consistently demonstrated the importance of educational leaders in school improvement (Ascenzi-Moreno et al., 2016; Darling Hammond et al., 2010; Louis et al., 2010; Scanlan & López, 2012). In order to become more proactive in meeting the needs of English Learners and close what Chao and Schenkel (2013), refer to as America’s other achievement gap, principals must increase their knowledge of the multiple aspects of EL education and play an active role in the design and implementation of services for EL students in their schools.

Finally, the manner in which language policy is defined, as an asset or a deficit (Ruíz, 1984), will likely create very distinct outcomes. The factors principals incorporate

into sensemaking, including the language orientation view adopted, will determine how services are implemented at the building level. Ultimately, how language support policies and practices are interpreted and implemented in our schools will have a substantial impact on improving or impeding the academic success of EL students.

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Appendix A: Survey

Principal Knowledge of English Learner Policies and Practices

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this survey, it will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

This survey is voluntary, responses will be anonymous, and all survey data will be reported in aggregate only. If you want to continue on to the survey, please check the agree box below.

Q1 ☐ I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE

Principal beliefs

Q2 Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements about language acquisition for ELs.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
ELs learn English best when they are immersed in an English only environment				
For both ELs and native English speakers, the acquisition of academic English is critical				
Teaching ELs to read in their native language promotes higher levels of reading in English				
The acquisition of English is aided by the development of native language literacy				

Language proficiency is a measure of oral language only				
Providing native language support for ELs slows the acquisition of English				
ELs who speak English fluently should be exited from EL services				

Q3 Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements about teaching ELs.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Teachers are most effective when they understand the cultural backgrounds of their EL students				
When teaching content to ELs, teachers should modify their instruction to account for				
EL students' level of proficiency in the language of instruction				
EL language development and academic success is the responsibility of all teachers				
Teachers who are not certified ESL or bilingual teachers but have ELs in their classrooms need special training to effectively teach ELs				
ESL and classroom teacher collaboration and coplanning has a positive impact on EL achievement				
If a teacher is effective with general education students, they will be effective with ELs				
When teaching content to ELs, teachers should be encouraged to draw on the previous experiences of the EL students				
Teachers with ELs in their classrooms should be trained in culturally responsive				

education practices				
School personnel know how to work with an interpreter				
Teachers with ELs in their classroom know how to communicate with the parents of EL students				
School leaders should work to build partnerships with EL families				

Professional Development

Q4 In the past five years, how many hours of professional development have you received in total that is specific to the education of ELs?

None	
1-2 hours	
3-4 hours	
5-6 hours	
More than 6 hours	

Q5 Have you received professional development specific to the education of ELs in the past five years? Please check yes or no to each choice.

	yes	no
Second language acquisition		
Culturally responsive educational practices		
Family and community involvement strategies		
Research based instructional strategies for ELs		

Assessment practices for ELs		
Child find procedure for ELs (process to identify students with special needs)		
Students identified as EL and qualify for Special Education services		
Students identified as EL and qualify for Gifted and Talented services		
Evaluation of general education teachers with ELs in their classroom		
The World Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) English Language Development Standards		
Every Child Succeeds Act (ESSA), EL component		
Entrance and exit criteria		
Minnesota Bilingual and Multilingual Seals and World Language Proficiency Certificates		
The Minnesota Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success (LEAPS)		
Other (please specify)		

Q6 In the past five years, has your district offered any professional development opportunities specific to the education of ELs for principals?

No

Yes. Please specify content of professional development session(s)

Q7 In the past five years, has your school provided professional development opportunities specific to the education of ELs for your staff?

No

Yes. Please specify content of professional development session(s)

Q8 Does your school use any of the following to measure the language proficiency of

ELs? Check yes, no, or not sure to each choice.

	Yes	No	Not sure
Course grades			
State-mandated English proficiency exams (ACCESS)			
State or local content area assessment (for example, reading or math assessments)			
Input from teachers			
Input from parents			
Response to Intervention (RtI) or other data screeners and progress monitoring			
Minnesota academic standards			
Other (please specify)			

Q9 Does your school use any of the following to measure the academic progress of ELs?

Check yes, no, or not sure to each choice.

	Yes	No	Not sure
Course grades			
State-mandated English proficiency exams (ACCESS)			

State or local content area assessment (for example, reading or math assessments)			
Input from teachers			
Input from parents			
Response to Intervention (RtI) or other data screeners and progress monitoring			
Minnesota academic standards			
Other (please specify)			

Q10 After students exit EL services, how does your school monitor the academic proficiency of former ELs? Check all that apply.

	Yes	No	Not sure
Course grades			
State-mandated English proficiency exams (ACCESS)			
State or local content area assessment (for example, reading or math assessments)			
Input from teachers			
Input from parents			
Response to Intervention (RtI) or other data screeners and progress monitoring			
Minnesota academic standards			
Other (please specify)			

Q11 In your school, how long are exited, or former EL students officially monitored after completing the exiting process?

Not monitored	
1 year	
2 years	
3 years	
More than 3 years	
Don't know	

Q12 For each of the following, please indicate the degree to which it is a challenge in your school.

	Not a challenge at all	Slight challenge	Moderate challenge	Significant challenge
Identifying ELs				
Monitoring the English proficiency levels of ELs				
Monitoring the academic progress of ELs				
Monitoring the academic progress of former ELs				
Evaluating the capacity of non- ESL teachers who have EL s in their classroom				
Engaging the parents of ELs				
Applying EL program exit				

criteria				
Implementing Response to Intervention (RtI) or other tiered service models with ELs				
Implementing EL instructional models as designed				
Making time for general education teachers to collaborate with ESL or bilingual teachers				
Resources available to devote to the education of ELs				
General education teacher awareness of EL proficiency levels and supports needed				
Working with specific EL populations such as refugees, long- term ELs, specific cultural groups, Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)				
Other (please specify)				

Q13 Are there other significant challenges in your school related to ELs?

No

Yes. Please specify.

Q14 How familiar are you with each of the following as outlined by the Minnesota Department of Education regarding ELs

EL entrance and exit criteria				
Minnesota Language Survey				
Minnesota Language Education Delivery Frameworks				
EL program standards concerning specialized language instruction				
The Learning English for Academic Proficiency and Success Act (LEAPS Act)				
Number of EL students needed to require specialized language program				
EL program standards concerning equitable access to services and materials				
EL screening procedures				
Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE)				
Translation and interpretation requirements				
Minnesota Bilingual and Multilingual Seals and World Language Proficiency Certificates				

Q15 How familiar are you with each of the following?

	Not very familiar	Slightly familiar	Very familiar	Extremely familiar
WIDA (World Class Instructional Design and Assessment) English Language Development Standards				
Interpreting scores from the ACCESS for ELs (English proficiency assessment)				
Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) EL component				

Q16 Are you an elementary or secondary principal? (If K-8 please choose one)

Elementary

Secondary

Q17 Which program types are available at your elementary school? Select all that apply

English as a Second Language (ESL). ESL pullout-- small group or individualized ESL instruction outside of the mainstream classroom. Taught by a licensed ESL teacher.

Sheltered Instruction. Teachers use English as the medium for providing content area instruction, adapting their language to the proficiency level of the students. Instruction focuses on language through content rather than language in isolation. Teachers use English as the medium for providing content area instruction, adapting their language to the proficiency level of the students. Instruction focuses on language through content

rather than language in isolation. Taught by trained classroom teacher or ESL teacher.

Collaborative or Co-teaching. The ESL teacher instructs side by side with the grade level classroom teacher, joint planning time is provided.

Two-Way Immersion/Dual Immersion. Integrate language minority and language majority students in a school setting that promotes full bilingual proficiency and high academic achievement for both groups of students. Student body is 50% native English speakers and 50% native speakers of target language.

Early Exit Bilingual Program. Some initial instruction provided in the students' first language, primarily for the introduction of reading, but also for clarification. Instruction in the first language is phased out rapidly.

Late Exit Bilingual Program. Developmental bilingual education seeks to obtain fluency in both languages before releasing students. Students are mainstreamed based on English proficiency that is sufficient for sustaining academic achievement in an all-English classroom.

Heritage Language Program. The teaching of a language to students with some proficiency in or a cultural connection to that language through family, community, or country of origin.

Q18 What program types are available for EL students at your secondary school? Select all that apply.

English as a Second Language (ESL). ESL class period surrounded by other EL students yet still within the mainstream educational community where students are

provided more linguistic modifications and clarifications during content instruction.

Taught by a licensed ESL teacher.

Sheltered Instruction. Teachers use English as the medium for providing content area instruction, adapting their language to the proficiency level of the students. Instruction focuses on language through content rather than language in isolation. Taught by trained content area teacher or ESL teacher.

Collaborative or Co-teaching. The ESL teacher instructs side by side with the content area teacher, joint planning time is provided.

Continuation of Two-Way/Dual Immersion. Two-way immersion programs are typically implemented at the secondary level only when the program began at the elementary level, two- way immersion programs are not commonly initiated at the secondary level.

Newcomer program. Typically designed for new immigrant, recently arrived students at the middle school or high school level. This program incorporates ESL instruction in content area classes, incorporating sheltered instruction, and then mainstreams students into linguistically less demanding classes.

Heritage Language Programs. The teaching of a language to students with some proficiency in or a cultural connection to that language through family, community, or country of origin.

Q19 What do you believe are the are the strengths of the EL program(s) in your building?

Q20 Please identify which of the following best describes the location of your school.

(This question is to assure that all portions of the state are represented)

Rural

Suburban

Urban

Q21 How long have you been principal at your current school?

1 year or less

2-3 years

4-5 years

More that 5 years

Q22 What percentage of students in your current school are English Learners (EL)? Your best estimate is fine.

Less than 5 %

5-20 %

21-30 %

31-40 %

41-50%

41-51

Over 50 %

Q23 Including other schools where you have served as principal, how many years have you been a principal?

1 year or less

2-3 years

4-5 years

More that 5 years

Q24 Including all schools for which you have served as principal, how many years have you supported EL students in school?

1 year or less

2-3 years

4-5 years

More than 5 years

Appendix B: Interview Principal Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. I am a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota conducting research on English Learner (EL) policy interpretation and implementation in Minnesota schools. I will be asking you questions regarding your experience with EL policy interpretation and implementation and consequently, EL services provided at your school.

These questions are designed to reflect the understanding of Minnesota principals regarding EL learning in general, and EL policy implementation specifically. The questions are designed for you to consider what your school looks like and does. I am hoping that the results from this study will shed light on the education of EL students and potentially improve academic achievement for this student group.

With your permission, I will record our conversation to more accurately transcribe your answers. (Turn on recorder.) Ask: "I am now recording our conversation. Do you approve of this conversation being recorded?" If interviewee says yes, continue. If no, state that the recorder is being turned off and written notes will be taken instead.

Background Information

Tell me a little bit about how long you've been a principal and what your experience with EL students

Possible probe: yrs as principal, rural, urban, suburban, EL population(s)

Professional Development

Is there an avenue through which principals in your district learn about EL policy, practice, and/or current research trends? (PD) Who do you think should be responsible for providing principals with that information?

Is there an avenue through which teachers learn how to meet needs of EL students? Who is responsible?

Knowledge of Current Research and Policy Related to EL Students

What district, state (LEAPS), or national policies (ESSA, WBWF) shape your understanding of the learning and education of ELs?

Possible probe: do they shape services offered?

Beliefs

Who do you believe should be responsible for teaching EL students? What do you think is the best way to teach EL students?

Possible probe: How long in language specific programs? Native language? Why?

EL Service Models and Strengths/Site Level Decision-Making

What service delivery model(s) are provided at your school? How are they determined?

Who is involved in decision-making?

Please describe any customs, or norms (practices) that may be present in your school community. (example-language use policies)

Possible probes: native language? strengths?

Resource Allocation

Do you think services for EL students are given the same priority as other mandated services in your building? (e.g. Spec Ed) Please explain.

What resources are dedicated to providing services to EL students?

Is there anything else you would like to add?